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ABSTRACT

This report evaluates ten marriage and relationship skills curricula that are representative of materials currently in use as part of school-based marriage education for junior high and high school students. The evaluation is based on five criteria: (1) the curriculum has a marriage focus; (2) it conveys to students that marriage is typically beneficial; (3) it is comprehensive; (4) it is age-appropriate; and (5) it recommends general habits of good characters and characteristics of personal development which can enhance marriageability. No marriage curriculum met all five criteria, although three contained a sustained marriage focus, affirmed the benefits of marriage, and came closer than the others in offering diverse types of knowledge about marriage in an age-appropriate fashion. Recommendations are included for educators, parents, and community leaders on the guidance students should receive for marriage preparation. Throughout the report are sidebars containing additional information. The report concludes with a list of additional curricula and 89 endnotes. (JDM)

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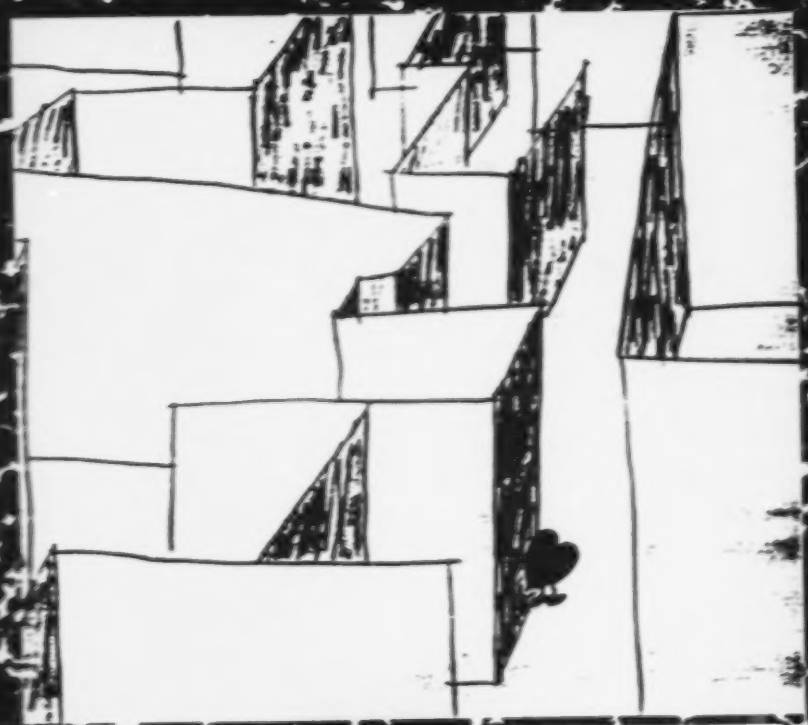
A Report to the Nation

Dana Mack, Principal Investigator

Hungry Hearts

Evaluating the New Curricula for Teens on Marriage and Relationships



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This report stems from, and helps to inform, two on-going areas of investigation by the Institute for American Values. The first is the status and future of marriage, including how marriage is currently taught to high school and college students. The second is the state of courtship in the U.S. and its relationship to marriage. Dana Mack, this report's principal investigator, is an affiliate scholar at the institute and the director of its project on childhood and adolescence. The Institute is grateful to Maggie Gallagher, Don Browning, and Arthur E. Rasmussen for their scholarly and editorial contributions to this report, and to the W.H. Brady Foundation and the Achelis Foundation for their generous financial support. The contributions of other supporters are also greatly appreciated.

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Hungry Hearts
Evaluating the New High School
Curricula on Marriage and Relationships

	PERIOD 1	PERIOD 2	PERIOD 3	PERIOD 4	PERIOD 5	PERIOD 6	PERIOD 7	PERIOD 8
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	TO							
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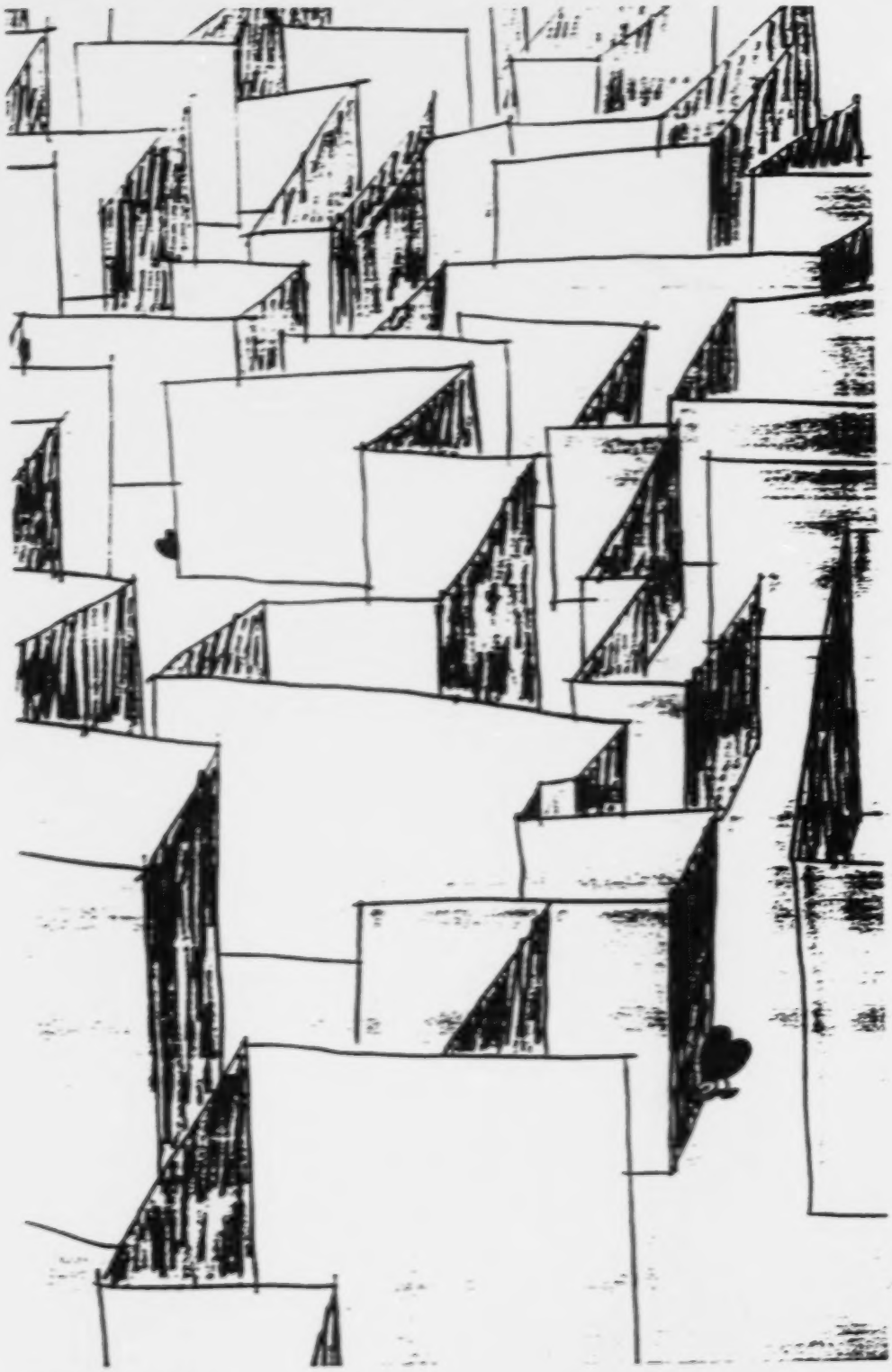

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Introduction

This report evaluates ten leading marriage and relationship skills curricula currently in use in U.S. schools. The report's central finding is that most of these curricula are inadequate. Each curriculum has its own qualities, of course, and Dana Mack has sought carefully to represent those qualities accurately, and then to assess each curriculum individually in light of five criteria for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of school-based marriage education.

Some of these new curricula are impressive and potentially important. But too many of them are one-dimensional and intellectually thin. Too many focus only on the psychological, interpersonal dimensions of marriage, while all but ignoring the fact that, in addition to being a private relationship, marriage is also a public institution with important legal, economic, social, and religious dimensions. Too many all but ignore the important ways in which literature, art, history, anthropology, and philosophy can contribute to students' understanding of marriage. The report's central recommendation is that a new generation of school-based marriage education curricula should expand its vision of what marriage is and what marriage education can be.

This is one of several Institute reports which explores the topic of school-based marriage education. In *The Course of True Love: Marriage in High School Textbooks* (1998), Paul C. Vitz looks at how current high school health textbooks treat the subject of marriage. In *The Age of Unwed Mothers: Is Teen Pregnancy the Problem?* (1999), Maggie Gallagher investigates the understanding of marriage reflected in school programs on teen pregnancy. In *Closed Hearts, Closed Minds: The Textbook Story of Marriage* (1997), Norval D. Glenn evaluates the 20 leading college-level textbooks on marriage and the family. In *The Experts' Story of Courtship* (2000), Dan Cere critically evaluates current intellectual and research models in higher education regarding courtship and marriage. This entire cluster of marriage-and-education issues is also addressed in *The Marriage Movement: A Statement of Principles* (2000). Together, these six recent reports seek to offer a comprehensive assessment of what our society currently teaches high school and college students about marriage and family life.

In cooperation with the Independent Women's Forum, the Institute is also currently completing a major research project on the attitudes of college women regarding courtship and marriage. Finally, in Dana Mack's *The Book of Marriage: The Wisest Answers to the Biggest Questions* (forthcoming, Eerdmans, 2001), the Institute seeks to implement some of its own recommendations by producing a book of annotated readings intended for engaged and married couples and for classrooms, religious institutions, and community-based marriage initiatives. All of these reports and publications are intended to contribute intellectually to the emerging marriage movement in the United States.

David Blankenhorn
President, Institute for American Values

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Why These Curricula Matter

Increasingly, schools are teaching teenagers about marriage. For generations, of course, junior high and high school students have studied subjects at least indirectly related to marriage, such as home economics, life management, family and consumer sciences, health, sex education, and (more recently) abstinence education. But as *Time* magazine noted in 1999, the emergence of the school-based "primer on matrimony" is a "relatively new" phenomenon in our society.[1]

The current expansion of school-based marriage education in the United States demands our attention for three reasons. First, the growing popularity of these courses, combined with the emergence of new marriage and relationship skills curricula now available to teachers, constitutes a noteworthy current trend in American education. Second, these new courses and curricula constitute an important result of, and influence on, the emerging "marriage movement" in the United States — the broad, largely informal coalition of educators, legislators, scholars, community leaders, marriage counselors and others who are working in a variety of ways to strengthen marriage in our society.[2] To a significant degree, these developments in the schools shed light on the current status of that larger movement: its strengths, weaknesses, victories to date, philosophical orientation, and current challenges and opportunities. Finally, these courses and curricula tell us something about our society as a whole. Examined as a kind of mirror, or collective self-portrait, these recent developments in school-based marriage education offer revealing insights into how our society currently views marriage and what core understandings about marriage we wish to pass on to our children.

What is Marriage Education?

If schools are now teaching about marriage, what exactly are they teaching? What, ideally, *should* they be teaching? These are complex questions, giving rise to diverse answers and to numerous philosophical and pedagogical disagreements, both among educators and in the larger society. Accordingly, evaluating the new marriage curricula is more than a purely empirical matter; it also inevitably reflects normative assumptions about the definition and importance of marriage. Moreover, while a respectable body of scholarly research points to the benefits of marriage education for engaged and married couples,[3] research on whether and how school-based marriage education courses actually influence the subsequent courting and marrying behavior of students is all but nonexistent. For the purposes of this report, successful school-based marriage education is defined *as education that conveys scientifically accurate knowledge about marriage, both as an intimate relationship and a social institution, and that enhances for the student the likelihood of achieving a successful and enduring marriage.*

In this context, and although many of the new courses and much of our national conversation on this topic blend together the ideas of "marriage education" and "relationship skills," this report often seeks to disentangle the two. Acquiring generic relationship skills probably helps students in many ways, including in their family relationships, but we posit as a starting point for our evaluation that a good marriage is not the same thing as a good relationship, and that passing on a marriage culture to the next generation requires more than teaching them how to hone their interpersonal skills.[4] Moreover, it is clear that current parental and public support for these new educational initiatives stems not primarily from general concerns about the quality of interpersonal relationships, but instead from specific

concerns about the harmful consequences of high rates of divorce and unmarried childbearing in our society, and from the related desire to find new ways, especially when communicating to young people, to strengthen marriage.

About this Report

No comprehensive, reliable data exists on how many schools or school districts currently offer or require marriage education. Presently, courses on marriage and relationship skills appear to be most widely prevalent in Florida, Utah, Minnesota, California, South Dakota, Massachusetts, and New Jersey. Since 1998, Florida has required "marriage and relationship skills" education for all high school students. State legislators in Oklahoma are currently considering proposals to expand school-based marriage and relationship skills education in that state.[1] In Utah, one county currently requires marriage education, and many other Utah schools offer such courses.[2] Based on interviews with marriage educators, public school officials, and publishers of curricula, we estimate roughly that about 2000 schools in the 50 states currently provide formal courses on marriage and relationship skills, and that this number is growing.[3]

This report evaluates ten currently available school-based marriage and relationship skills curricula. Today, information about marriage is presented to U.S. students in a wide diversity of guises, depending upon the state, the district, the school, the teacher, and the course title. Marriage and relationship skills education may be available to students in the form of

Who Uses Marriage and Relationship Skills Courses, and Why?

We interviewed fourteen teachers and counselors in Alabama, California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Colorado and New York, all of whom have used one or more of the curricula evaluated here. Some of their comments appear elsewhere in this report, but to summarize what we learned from them in general:

Teachers who use marriage and relationship skills curricula are typically advocates of teen sexual abstinence. They want to prepare young people for strong, stable marriages. They do not believe that a non-marital relationship can substitute for a marriage.

Yet, they are not well informed with regard to the variety of curricula on the market. Most settled for the first program they found, massaging and supplementing it if they felt it in some way lacking.

Relationship skills are employed in a variety of contexts — from mandatory 9th grade social studies and health courses to elective family and consumer science courses for juniors and seniors. Teachers think that learning relationship skills is important for today's youth. They lament that young people have "no clue" as to what a good relationship looks like, because they do not see such relationships modeled often enough in the adult world. Even if young people grow up in stable homes, teachers say, their values are undermined by media vulgarity and an increasingly crass peer subculture, where trustworthiness, caring, commitment, and good manners are more the rarity than the rule. Teachers regret the "value confusion" that haunts so many young people, but in their talk about teen "choices," they seem at the same time to be caught up in a philosophy of instruction that defines values as relative. Almost all the teachers we spoke with were reluctant to prescribe behavior to young people in terms of right and wrong. They preferred instead the vocabulary of "healthy" versus "unhealthy," or "risk" versus "safety."

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stand-alone courses, or as a part of school-based social services or voluntary support groups (such as teen pregnancy prevention programs), or as one or more components within other courses, such as health, sexuality, family living, life skills, consumer sciences, parenting, and others. In 1998, for example, Mississippi passed a law requiring all high school sex education courses to teach that "a mutually faithful, monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the only appropriate setting for sexual intercourse."[5] In Merced, California, marriage and relationship skills are incorporated into the 9th grade social studies curriculum; the unit on marriage follows the unit on geography.[6] One widely used marriage curriculum, *The Art of Loving Well*, was originally intended by its designers at Boston University to be used in high school English classes.

It appears that high school health courses, based on a relatively small number of widely used health textbooks, remain the primary sources for teenagers of school-provided information on marriage. A 1998 Institute report, *The Course of True Love: Marriage in High School Textbooks*, evaluated the marriage-related content of recently published high school health textbooks.[7]

This report complements and extends that 1998 report by focusing on recently developed curricula specifically designed for junior high and high school courses on marriage and relationship skills. To select the curricula to be evaluated, we began with the list of those marriage and relationship skills curricula described as designed for use in schools by the Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education (*www.smartmarriages.com*), the most

Marriage Ed in Many Schools is a Mock Wedding

In a computer search of over forty local newspapers from around the country (including six in Florida, which passed a law requiring high school marriage education in 1998) we found little evidence of stand alone marriage classes. What we did find, however, was a host of family and consumer science courses which touch on the subject of marriage. What do they teach?

Weddings, mostly. At Tennessee's Hamilton High School, for example, students spend six weeks planning a wedding and honeymoon, sticking to a budget of $20,000. "It teaches them about the sanctity of marriage," principal Sonny Hicks told the Memphis Commercial Appeal. Teacher Linda Cooper, however, admits that "the main thing... they learn is that to have a successful wedding, it takes a lot of planning and more money than expected."[1]

The mock wedding of a Family Living class in Georgia's Evans High School focused mostly on finances and purchases — budgeting a wedding and selecting an engagement ring — but the unit also included such topics such as how to find a marriage partner, and wedding traditions in different cultures.[2]

Baton Rouge's Ouachita Parish High School, Leah Wilkerson teaches about marriage and relationships. "I try to start them out with a marriage unit to teach them there is a sequence," she told the Baton Rouge Advocate. "A lot of them don't have relationship skills, and there's a lot more to a relationship than what they think."[3]

1. Deborah White, "Students Apply Real-Life Skills to Pull Off Mock Wedding," Memphis Commercial Appeal, February 1, 1999
2. Melissa Hall, "Mock Wedding Fun Part of Serious Class at Evans high School on the Responsibilities Married Couples Face," Augusta Chronicle, May 2, 1999
3. Melissa M. Scallan, "Lessons on Being an Adult: Modern Home Ec Class Is More Than Cooking," Baton Rouge Advocate, May 31, 1999

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comprehensive and up-to-date clearinghouse known to us for information on marriage education.

We verified and augmented this list on the basis of newspaper searches, interviews with publishers, and interviews with teachers and education leaders, especially in Florida and Oklahoma, two states in which the public and educational discussion of these issues is quite visible. Because course content is typically determined by either local districts or (what is even more common) individual schools and teachers, we do not suggest that the ten curricula evaluated in this report are the only curricula currently in use in school-based marriage and relationship skills courses. At the same time, we do believe that the curricula chosen for evaluation in this report are the most important and popular of the new marriage and relationship skills curricula, and that they are generally representative of the universe of curricula currently in use.

Criteria for Evaluation

This report evaluates marriage skills curricula on the basis of five criteria. First, *does the curriculum have a marriage focus?* It may seem odd to ask whether a marriage education curriculum discusses marriage, but we found a number of curricula promoted as marriage education programs that, in fact, have little if any content specifically related to marriage. We view as virtually self-evident the proposition that, if a curriculum is intended is to educate students about marriage, then marriage must play a starring role in the curriculum.

Second, *does the curriculum convey to students that marriage is typically beneficial, or does it adopt a position of neutrality?* Our assumption is that competent marriage education should include scientifically valid information about the benefits as well as the challenges of marriage. Similarly, competent marriage education should not, in our view, convey to students, in the face of overwhelming scholarly evidence to the contrary,[11] that marriage, divorce, and unmarried childbearing are three equally exemplary or desirable living arrangements. Successful marriage education should clearly acknowledge marriage's status in our society as a foundational institution whose success is important not just to the couple, but also to children, extended families, and the wider community.

Third, *is the curriculum comprehensive?* Marriage education should deepen students' understanding of marriage not only as a private, intimate relationship, but also as a multidimensional social institution that requires and presupposes communal support. Comprehensive marriage education should convey at least three types of knowledge: first, scientific knowledge on the benefits of marriage for individuals and society; second, knowledge of those attitudes, behaviors, and skills which are likely to help prevent divorce and improve marital satisfaction; and third, a culturally sophisticated knowledge of marriage such that, for the student, both interpersonal skills and academic findings about marriage are situated within larger and personally enriching cultural frameworks, knowledge of which derives primarily from social science disciplines such as history and anthropology, and, in particular, from art and literature that engages students not only intellectually, but also emotionally and aesthetically.

Fourth, *is the curriculum age-appropriate?* Is content sensitive to the developmental issues of adolescence? Is the language appropriate for the intellectual level of the average middle school or high school student? Is the course content relevant to the experience of today's teenagers?

Fifth and finally, *does the curriculum specify and recommend those general habits of good character and characteristics of personal development which are likely to enhance mar-*

riageability? Especially in the case of younger students, for whom marriage itself may be a distant concern, marriage education can profitably focus in part on personal and character development, including conveying to students an awareness of such virtues as self restraint, honesty, kindness, courtesy, and respect for others and for the opposite sex. For many students, especially those only 13 or 14 years old, one way to help them eventually become good spouses is to help them become good people.

The Top Three Curricula

No marriage curriculum currently available met all five criteria in a superlative fashion. However, three of the evaluated curricula contained a sustained marriage focus, affirmed the benefits of marriage, and also came closer than the others to offering diverse types of knowledge about marriage in an age-appropriate fashion. These top three curricula are: *Connections: Relationships and Marriage*, *RQ: Relationship Intelligence*, and *The Art of Loving Well*.

Connections: Relationships and Marriage is primarily a relationship skills curriculum, providing a strong grounding in communication tools and theory without simultaneously conveying to students (as do some other programs) that marriage is essentially tedious and risky. Its use of a video, *You Can Marry For Keeps*, adds a strong narrative component, showing real life couples talking about the importance and benefits of enduring marriage. *Connections* is weaker in educating students about both the large social contexts of marriage and current academic research on the consequences of divorce and unwed childbearing.

RQ: Relationship Intelligence is the only evaluated curriculum that offers students a direct argument, well grounded in social science evidence, that marriage genuinely does matter, for lovers, children, and society. It also blends conflict resolution skills with excerpts from literature to convey the message that sex without union is empty, and that marriage is where union can be most complete.

The Art of Loving Well, a literature-based curriculum, was at one point intended largely as a teen pregnancy prevention program. Yet it offers a comprehensive (if at times indirect) approach to marriage education. By reading and reflecting on works of literature, young people look at love and marriage from an enriching diversity of perspectives, from a young widow looking for another husband to a ten year old girl coping with her father's remarriage. Currently, however, *The Art of Loving Well* does not directly teach interpersonal relationship skills and does not present the scientific evidence on the benefits of marriage.

Evaluations of the Ten Curricula

PEERS (or PAIRS KIDS)

Description

PEERS, or as it has recently been renamed, *PAIRS KIDS*, is the school-based curriculum published by the *PAIRS* Foundation (now Pairs International, Inc.), adapted from its widely used adult marriage program, PAIRS. The goal of this curriculum is to help "develop for teens and young adults the skills to sustain loving, caring, supportive, enduring relationships in a rapidly changing world."[12] The *PEERS/PAIRS KIDS* curricula are used in some capacity, either partially or wholly, in about 100 schools, mainly in Illinois and Florida.[13]

A Public Philosophy for Marriage Education, by Don S. Browning and Gloria G. Rodriguez

The marriage education movement should be seen as analogous to the discussion within political philosophy of what Jurgen Habermas calls "discourse ethics," the rules and skills governing communication for solving problems and facilitating joint action. As societies become more differentiated and pluralistic, we must all learn more fair and effective ways of communicating — in business, in government, and in everyday practical relations, but first of all within marriage and family. In order to have communicative competence in business and government, we must first learn what good communication means in the home. This is an insight taught by philosophers from Aristotle to Aquinas to the contemporary liberal feminist Susan Muller Okin.

Rightly understood, marriage education is an effort to bring discourse ethics, or the ethics of fair and open communication, into the sphere of intimate relations. It is a way to improve our skills in understanding the other from his or her point of view as we also help the other come to know and hear our own thoughts and feelings. Developing "communicative competence" (another term from Habermas) in a variety of fields will be an important issue in our society in the future. We see no reason why marriage and family should be excluded from this more general educational trend, and we can imagine many reasons why it should gain the approval of a public philosophy undergirding public policy.

But marriage education cannot stand alone. It will work best when used within a context of strong and clear justifications for marriage within the surrounding culture. Since our society appears to have difficulties appropriating our historically classic justifications for marriage, many people today are tempted to turn to newer ones coming from the social sciences.... These narrowly social-utilitarian or ethical-egoist appeals are attractive to people in a secular age. They are especially attractive to the professions of law, medicine, and psychotherapy that feel uncomfortable with classical religious, moral, and philosophical groundings. Justifications for addressing marriage and family issues built on "what people want," or what seems to contribute to their well being, enable these professions to justify their work publicly in ways that the older rationales seem unable to achieve in the current social atmosphere. In fact, at the same time, that these prudential and social-utility justifications for marriage have always had some place in the Western religious tradition, although generally a subordinate one.

A generous public philosophy for marriage and family will find ways to orchestrate and bring together the two languages of health and commitment. Roman Catholic marriage theory always has spoken of the health and comfort goods of marriage and family, but it anchored these goods in God's will for creation and saw individual and social health as dimensions of the higher quest to enjoy the good of God. Even Luther and Calvin saw marriage and family as social goods, but ones that first of all reflected the ordinances of God. Judaism and Islam took much the same approach, building, however, the grounds of these institutions on the idea of covenant. If marriage is to avoid turning into simply a cost-benefit calculation, like purchasing a car, we need to absorb and recontextualize its health benefits within the traditions of the Western religions, and probably also within the classic Eastern religions as well.

Don S. Browning is a professor at the University of Chicago Divinity School and a co-author of *From Culture Wars to Common Ground* (1997). Gloria G. Rodriguez is the author of *Raising Hispanic Power* (1999) and the founder and CEO of Avance, a nonprofit family support and education program in San Antonio, Texas. This essay is adapted from their forthcoming book, *Restructuring the Tapestry: Toward a Public Philosophy and Policy for Families*.

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PEERS, a three level course combining therapeutic self-exploration exercises with training in communications skills, originally consisted of 30 sessions, divided into 26 classes that ran about 50 minutes each. Revamped this year as *PAIRS KIDS*, Level I has been significantly slimmed down. It no longer contains as much of a therapeutic component. Rather, it is a core communications skills program of 10 sessions. Levels II and III of *PAIRS KIDS* now contain the bulk of the original *PEERS* program's exercises in self-analysis, as well as its more experiential, confessional encounters with partners. Seth Eisenberg, CEO of *PAIRS*, sees this revamping as an important step in creating a more versatile and user friendly *PAIRS* program for schools.[14] He emphasizes that while Level I's focus on skills makes it an appropriate curriculum for classroom use by teachers untrained in therapeutic methods, Levels II and III lend themselves to use by counselors and social workers in middle school and high school support group settings.

The typical *PEERS* and *PAIRS KIDS* class begins with the instructor introducing students to a relationship concept via transparencies, diagrams, and new vocabulary. Guided meditation and extensive role-playing exercises and partner exercises are key instructional methods. Homework assignments ask students to reflect on what they have learned and articulate how they felt in doing the various skills exercises.

In Level I of *PAIRS KIDS*, students learn principally communications skills and styles, focusing in particular on communication styles that people adopt when they are under stress. Thus, students are introduced to such archetypes as the "blamer," the "placater," the "computer, (hyper-rationalist)" and the "distracter." Students are then taught how to avoid falling into those "stress" patterns. Among the principal communications skills students practice:

- *The Daily Temperature Reading*: a script designed to formalize daily communication of both information about the self, appreciation of one's partner, and potential problem spots in the relationship.
- *Talking Tips*: the sort of "I scripts" or "I statements" that enable the speaker to identify problems in a relationship, permit reactions, state his or her wishes, and acknowledge a partner's worth. Examples of "I scripts" designed to enhance both clarity and diplomacy in communication are "I notice that you", "I assume (this means)", "I am hurt by", "I want (specific request)", and "I appreciate you for..."[15]
- *Anger Rituals*: controlled expressions of anger such as the "Volcano," in which one asks for permission to vent for a specific amount of time about something not related to his partner; or the "Haircut," in which one asks permission to vent about a problem related to his partner. Anger rituals also include the "Fair Fight for Change," a communication script designed to lead partners through speaker-listener techniques in ways that will ensure clear communication and collaborative problem solving.[16]
- *Caring Behaviors*: small, easy ways in which one lets a partner "know that he or she is important." These "small frequent acts of sensitivity, kindness and caring" include giving "a hug" or asking "how [one's partner is] feeling" (Student Workbook, p.147).
- *Avoiding Stinking Thinking*: recognizing one's own negative thinking patterns, and subjecting them to a reality check by using positive communications tactics. Thus, students are taught to employ good faith "I-statements" — for example, replacing "You keep refusing to talk about this" with "I notice that you don't talk about this" — in an effort to clarify the intentions of others. They are also encouraged to "take pleasure in saying and doing nice things," even if others do not respond (p.163).

Levels II and III of *PAIRS KIDS* also contain some relationship skills components, especially as regards to positive conflict resolution techniques. (Among these are asking for pos-

itive change rather than criticizing; asking for change in small steps; assuming the best about one's partner's motives; and taking the initiative in doing caring things.) But these higher levels of the program are far more directed toward self-awareness. Through role-play, writing, discussion, and one-on-one encounters, students explore and analyze their emotions and emotional history. They learn to see self-understanding as the basis for good communication. In Level II, for example, students research their family history, recognizing their own "inner cast of characters," identify negative feelings and behaviors rooted in past fears and pains, administer a Myers-Briggs personality test, and discuss changing gender roles.

Evaluation

Does the PAIRS KIDS *have a marriage focus? Grade: D*

PAIRS KIDS, like its predecessor, *PEERS*, aims to teach students relationship skills and communication theory without much reference to their roles in a successful marriage. In *PEERS*, for example, the word "marriage" does not appear until Session 9 of Level II, where students are introduced to the importance of changing gender roles and shared decision making in marriage as well as in other relationships.

Does PAIRS KIDS *convey to students that marriage is beneficial and important? Grade: F*

PAIRS KIDS stresses emotional connection and bonding, but does not suggest that there is anything important, unique, or otherwise beneficial to the individual about the marital

A Social Worker on PEERS

I took PAIRS in 1992, and thought it was wonderful. I have done field testing and training for PEERS and PAIRS KIDS. I've found that just the first 10 sessions of PAIRS KIDS have a big effect on anger management in school support groups. But doing the entire curriculum means an in-depth change. The kids in my support group [half referred, half volunteers] developed a lot of self-awareness. Some kids who had disagreements before the program came out friends. Others who didn't know each other well became good friends. The Talking Tips...are a structure, a means to an end. The result is that people can communicate in a more authentic way and can understand others in a more authentic way. I use these skills in my own marriage, although not in the exact form. I see them as the 'how to' of character education. Seeing these skills modeled is very important, and when teachers reinforce them by modeling them, they can become a way of life.

Teachers need to connect with students. [Transmitting] the subject matter follows from that connection...Yet, some kids need to let go of emotional baggage before they can learn. Kids today need modeling and nurturing. They are more alone, and hooked up with technology. Interpersonal skills are an awakening to them because they are under immense pressure for grades and academic achievement, and they don't get a lot of time from adults. We had so much more than the kids are getting today. A lot of adults knew me and cared what I did or didn't do growing up. Today it's very different. Both parents are working, and time is limited. And on the TV you have programs...like "Friends," where there are no standards or values, and no boundaries; people just do what they want, without regard for others.

-Shirley Burnside, Fenton High School, Elmhurst, Illinois

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relationship. The program does little to place generic relationship skills in the context of a marital relationship, and nothing to distinguish the marital relationship from other intimate relationships.

Is PAIRS KIDS *comprehensive in its treatment of marriage? Grade: D*

PAIRS KIDS offers a thorough grounding in a particular school of communication and relationship theory, one which emphasizes self-awareness, assertion, and personal pay-off as the key to good relationships. (In developing both *PAIRS* and *PEERS*, Lori H. Gordon draws heavily on Virginia Satir's theories of family dynamics and stress communication styles, as well as on George Bach's work on conflict resolution.[17]) In setting up models for good and bad relationships and communication, then, the program consistently sets up emotional archetypes rather than social or cultural archetypes. *PAIRS KIDS* offers young people no historical or cultural narratives of relationships beyond a discussion of contemporary gender roles. Its view of history is astonishingly narrow: only personal history counts. It fails to engage the question of marriage or marital roles from either a social science perspective or from a perspective that acknowledges the rich cultural traditions and particular vocations (for example, mothering and fathering) that typically inform married couples' lives.

Is PAIRS KIDS *age-appropriate? Grade: C*

PEERS/PAIRS KIDS author Lori Gordon is a respected pioneer in adult marriage education. While her pedagogic methods can be successful with adults, they may not transfer well to the high school classroom. In prescribing exercises in guided meditation, disclosure, and the release of emotions, both *PEERS* and its successor, *PAIRS KIDS*, enter into a territory that typically requires more than a teacher; it requires an experienced therapist, counselor, or social worker. Accordingly, many *PAIRS KIDS* higher-level exercises run the risk of inspiring student mockery, or worse, of being invasive and therefore upsetting in the school environment. Teachers we interviewed who had used the *PEERS* program tended to use its self-exploratory exercises only in voluntary, therapeutic settings, such as peer counseling and anger management groups. One teacher, also a trained social worker, said that in her classroom experience, students did not take the "Talking Tips" seriously; students, she said, didn't "get" them. A supporter of both *PAIRS* (for adults) and *PEERS*, she believes that a *PAIRS* facilitator needs to create a "trusting therapeutic environment," one that will allow young people to "bring up uncomfortable... issues."[18] She and another counselor whom we interviewed have successfully used *PEERS* in extra-curricular, voluntary support groups for special needs and at-risk teens.[19]

Does PAIRS KIDS *promote habits of character which are likely to enhance marriageability? Grade: C*

Though *PAIRS KIDS* touts the virtues of "caring behaviors," it fails to pass on the normative vocabulary of right and wrong. In its strict emphasis on self-awareness and self-fulfillment, it significantly downplays the self-forgetting that is often so crucial to the maintenance of satisfying, enduring relationships. While it may whet young peoples' appetites for the emotional rewards of intimacy, it treats intimate relationships in their most fluid and transitional guises, often by focusing on ways in which individuals seek change rather than permanence in relationships. In some ways understandably, it stresses evolution as the most important characteristic of enduring relationship enhancement. But marriage also requires

more than evolution. It requires constancy, a lifetime commitment. Constancy is not stressed in this program. To the contrary, *PEERS* culminating lesson features the following poem, an elegy not about maintaining relationships, but about ending them.

A Part

I shall go with you when you leave
We need not say good-bye.
For we have mingled, not just met.
And part of you is I.
Myriads of rivulets race down a slope
Touching and leaving after every shower.
Or, so combine that when they part
They share their drops forever from that hour[5]

EQ: The Social Emotional Intelligence Program

Description

EQ: The Social Emotional Intelligence Program is a character development curriculum designed for students in kindergarten through 8th grade. It consists of a teacher's manual and three separate student workbooks for different age groups. We confine ourselves in this report to evaluating the teacher manual and the student workbook for the 6th through the 8th grades.

EQ defines emotional intelligence as "a set of beliefs, attitudes and behaviors" which affect how well a person "understands and manages-his or her own emotions" as well as how he "recognizes and understands the emotions of others." One's capacity to build relationships depends on those virtues of character that enable the individual to manage his own emotions and empathize with the feelings of others. Thus, *EQ* involves "the practice of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral regulation" (Teacher's Manual, p. 9). One of its most important mottos is: "I am not my thoughts. I am not my feelings. It's what I do that proves who I really am" (Teacher's Manual, p. 11).

EQ teaches children 12 principles of character development and 12 principles of relationship development. The principles of character, or "Character Builders," include: recognizing the links between thoughts, feelings, and behavior; recognizing and understanding feelings; practicing impulse control and delayed gratification; problem-solving; taking responsibility; optimism; self respect; self-discipline; forgiveness; loyalty; resilience; and integrity. The principles of relationship development, or "Relationship Builders," include: listening skills; empathy; interdependence; developing friendships; maintaining friendships; reading non-verbal cues; inclusion and dealing with diversity; cooperation; recognizing our influence and power; conformity and dealing with peer pressure; assertiveness; and negotiation.

The goals of *EQ* are not only to teach children these principles, but to instruct teachers and parents as well. Adopting what might be called trickle-down marriage education theory, *EQ* encourages parents to "apply *EQ* concepts to their marriage and family relationships." Each lesson contains a note to parents urging them to reinforce *EQ* lessons at home. In Lesson One, for example, parents are told to ask children experiencing a strong emotion, "What are you thinking about now?", thus showing that thoughts lead to feelings, and then to discuss with children the idea that "feelings should not always be acted on." (Teacher's Manual, p.13).

EQ's pedagogy is simple and elegant. In classroom discussion and workbook worksheets, children are asked to brainstorm about, and discuss how to react to, moral dilemmas. Unlike

some of the other programs. *EQ* has a strong focus on getting students to listen to others, and not just as a strategy for self-gratification. The title of a unit that teaches "active listening" is: "Go ahead. I'm listening."[21] Here children are taught not only the techniques, but also the rewards of listening, and the reasons why self-preoccupation might get in the way of understanding another person's words. Another lesson, on forgiveness, bears an adage as valuable as it is hard to live by: "Forgiveness does more for the forgiver than the forgiven."[22]

Evaluation:

Does EQ *have a marriage focus? Grade: n/a.*

EQ is a program designed primarily for elementary schools. Its authors intend it to be a character education program — one aimed at eventual marital fitness, but designed more as a background or prerequisite for a more marriage-focused curriculum in high school.[23] Except for the indirect aim of helping parents and other adults improve their marriages, *EQ* is silent on marriage itself.

Does EQ *convey to students that marriage is beneficial and important? Grade: D.*

While it touches on the importance of good family relationships, *EQ* does not convey any attitude towards marriage, either positive or negative. This otherwise excellent character education program makes no allusion at all to marriage as a foundation of family life.

Is EQ *comprehensive in its treatment of marriage? Grade: n/a.*

EQ represents an attractive melding of character education and relationship skills building. It does not, however, directly educate students in any way about the meaning and dimensions of marriage.

Is EQ *age-appropriate? Grade: A.*

The content is well targeted for the sort of moral dilemmas and peer pressures that preteens and younger children routinely face. In simple language, and with examples from the simplest every day situations, it strives to instruct young people in those habits of mind and heart that will enable them to love and to earn the love of others.

Does EQ *promote habits of character which are likely to enhance marriageability? Grade: B.*

EQ introduces elementary and middle school children to those virtues of empathy, self-restraint, and civility which are essential for good marriages. In this sense, it is an ideal character education program for molding younger students into promising marriageable material. At the same time, this program could, but does not, focus on adolescent romance and responsible sexual behavior. The 6th - 8th grade level of *EQ* might be improved by adding a 13th "Character Builder," possibly entitled (to brush off an old but venerable word) "Chastity."

Connections: Dating and Emotions

Description

Connections: Dating and Emotions is one of two relationship skills programs authored by Charlene Kamper under the auspices of the Dibble Fund for Marriage Education.[24]

(The other program, *Connections: Relationships and Marriage* is discussed separately in this report). Designed for 13 to 17 year old students, this new program's principle goal,

according to the instructor's manual, is "to help guide young people in developing the skills necessary for establishing sound interpersonal relationships" (Teacher's Manual, p. ii).

Subsidiary goals of *Connections: Dating and Emotions* include assisting "young people in gaining a better understanding of who they are"; "guid[ing] them in learning how to relate to others in a dating situation"; teaching them to "be aware of problem personalities and negative behavior patterns that damage relationships"; and addressing "important issues regarding the management of emotions that are typically associated with dating." (*Teacher's Manual*, p. vii).

The curriculum is divided into four main topics: "Getting Ready," "Going Out," "Defining the Relationship," and "Starting Over." These four topics are broken up into fifteen 55-minute sessions. Varied teaching strategies are used. These include brainstorming, class discussion, small group and pair discussions, lectures, role-playing, and worksheets. The program introduces students to the idea that dating requires emotional maturity. It defines some of the characteristics of healthy dating relationships, such as "commitment, trust, [and] self-disclosure";[5] identifies some of the major characteristics of "problem people," or people with whom relationships are difficult; teaches the importance of controlling anger; and attempts to help students cope with post break-up feelings of rejection and regret. Finally, it warns students against pursuing or prolonging abusive relationships. Overall, *Connections: Dating and Emotions* is based on the premise that identifying personal dating expectations, whatever they may be, and communicating those expectations to potential partners is the key to satisfying relationships. In the Teacher's Manual, the "Key Concepts Guide" to Lesson Five says: "Communication is the cornerstone of healthy relationships."

Evaluation:

Does Connections: Dating and Emotions *have a marriage focus? Grade: F.*

There is no discussion of marriage in this curriculum. *Connections: Dating and Emotions* is intended as a guide to dating as such, dating understood as an end in itself, or to what many academics now simply refer to as "close relationships" — certainly not as a guide to marriage, or even as a guide to courtship, insofar as courtship is understood to mean seeking and eventually finding the right person to marry.[6]

Does Connections: Dating and Emotions *convey to students that marriage is beneficial and important? Grade: F.*

In the program's Forward, Charles G. Dibble writes: "We hope . . . that it will improve [young peoples'] chances for an eventual successful marriage" (Teacher's Manual, p. vi). Yet no attempt is made in this program to relate dating and communication skills to students' "chances for an eventual successful marriage," or even to the idea that many students may expect or wish someday to get married. Instead, students are taught certain standards for good relationships and are taught that relationships should be allowed to develop over time. They are not exposed to any discussion of marriage, or indeed, to any discussion at all of permanence in relationships.

Other Resources

Wing to Wing, Oar to Oar

Recently, University of Chicago professors Leon and Amy Kass published an anthology entitled Wing to Wing, Oar to Oar.[7] This book is an outstanding collection of readings on the subjects of courtship from literature, philosophy and the social sciences. Because it includes texts by such figures as Aristotle, Bacon, Kant, Kierkegaard, C.S. Lewis, Plato, and Rousseau, it is probably appropriate only for older high school students. Intended as a college text, it is not a curriculum per se, as there are no suggested activities accompanying the readings. But the book as a whole is an in-depth exploration of the evolution of Western ideals of courtship and marriage. Significantly, it is the single text currently available which touches in any depth on the ontological and spiritual dimensions of mate-selection and marriage.

Amy A. Kass and Leon R. Kass (eds). 2000 Wing to Wing, Oar to Oar: Readings on Courting and Marrying (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press).

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Is Connections: Dating and Emotions *comprehensive? Grade: F.*

No attempt is made in this program to set dating or courtship in historical or cultural contexts. Students are not offered any scientific information on the benefits of marriage, or on the distinctions between marriage and its alternatives, or on the possible harmful consequences of nonmarital sexual intimacy. In this would-be marriage education curriculum, marriage itself has been completely excised. Instead, relationships skills are presented as a way to enhance personal adolescent satisfaction through short term bonding.

Is Connections: Dating and Emotions *age-appropriate? Grade: B.*

Connections: Dating and Emotions, is designed to teach teens about the perils and pleasures of dating. It addresses many of the issues and conflicts high school students face in their romantic relationships. The role-playing exercises, games, and workbook activities in this program are likely to appeal to many adolescents, even though they are not uniformly conceived in the best of taste. In the unit entitled, "What Abuse Looks Like," for example, teachers are asked to divide the students into teams, to write the words "Emotional" and "Physical" above squares on the blackboard, and then to ask one representative from each team to step up to the blackboard. After giving each team representative either a fly swatter or a rolled newspaper, the teacher reads off a "situation" and asks the students to identify which type of abuse has been described. The first representative who correctly identifies the type of abuse makes a point for the team."

Does Connections: Dating and Emotions *promote habits of character which are likely to enhance marriageability? Grade: C.*

Connections: Dating and Relationships emphasizes the importance of self-knowledge and emotional maturity for successful dating. Yet, it fails to set any clear guidelines for young people about appropriate or good behavior when it comes to sexual attraction and romance. The only exception to this rule concerns dating abuse: In the lesson on "What Abuse Looks Like," students are told clearly that "an abusive relationship must end" (Teacher's Manual, p.31). As a result, for example, C*onnections: Dating and Emotions* does little to describe or discourage the overly intense involvements that often lead to sex and that can wreak havoc on adolescent lives. The program does offer very luke-warm warnings about sexual intimacy, such as the warning connected to Lesson 4: "In the beginning stages of dating it is not uncommon for individuals to feel pressured to move their relationship too quickly toward physical intimacy..." (Teacher's Manual, p. 15).

Overall, in understandably seeking to help students cope with some of the harsher and more painful realities of contemporary youth culture, this program makes little effort to challenge or change those realities. In recent decades, the high school courtship scene has drifted steadily away from

Other Resources (con't.)

Courtly Love in the Shopping Mall

Courtly Love in the Shopping Mall is a collection of literature and arts-based programs on love, courtship, and marriage. Written by Evelyn Shaevel and Peggy O'Donnell, this series of programs was conceived in 1985 with the help of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The original objective of the Courtly Love project was to present librarians and educators with models for introducing the arts and humanities to young people by way of a subject matter that could not fail to capture them: love. Thus emerged these excellent explorations of poetry, dance, music, film, literature, history and sociology, providing varied cultural-historical perspectives on the customs and rituals of mate selection, from medieval to contemporary times. Courtly Love's flexible mini-course outlines and comprehensive lists of books and films on the subject of romance make this book a useful resource for classroom marriage educators.

Evelyn Shaevel and Peggy O'Donnell with Susan Goldberg and Polly Kent (eds). 1991. Courtly Love in the Shopping Mall (Chicago, IL: American Library Association).

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the customs of socially regulated "dating," and instead toward patterns of intense, exclusive, short term coupling, or pair bonding. Some scholars suggest that this form of intensive bonding actually teaches young people the patterns and rationales of marital failure, primarily by instituting early on a regularly repeating cycle of falling in love, going steady, and breaking up.[28] To the degree that this assessment is accurate, *Connections: Dating and Emotions* could be greatly improved if it would more actively describe and affirm marriage as an eventual goal for young people, and if it would discourage exclusive pair bonding in the adolescent years, rather than simply accepting current trends. One of this program's final lessons, on relationship break-up, is called "Starting Over." Here the program sensitively attempts to mend broken young hearts. But the program could, and should, be more oriented toward preventing broken hearts.

WISEP For Teens

Description

WISEP for Teens consists of two dense binders full of class lessons and activities for a variety of potential prevention programs, from eating disorders to suicide prevention.[29]

This review focuses on the *WISEP* components most likely to be used by school-based marriage and relationship educators: the "Family" and "Communication" segments in Volume I, and the "Relationships," "Teen Pregnancy," and "Personal & Family Crisis" segments in Volume II.

Family and relationships skills make up a significant portion of Wendy Wise's program, which has been sold to high schools in 34 states and is used in over 40 California school districts.[30] The overall objective of *WISEP* is to prevent unhealthy behaviors by promoting self-esteem. But this program is of special interest because it offers a deeper education in psychoanalytic theory than other high school health or relationship skills programs currently on the market. From Freud to Erikson to Maslow, from Transactional Analysis to "close relationship theory," Wise presents a gamut of psychological approaches to such issues as self-understanding and self-esteem, emotions, values clarification, communications skills, sexuality, relationship development, and "love styles."

WISEP defines self-esteem as a "a sense of connectiveness, a sense of uniqueness, a sense of power, and a sense of models" (Foreword, Volume I). Accordingly, activities in Volume I are focused, first, on how self-esteem influences personality traits, values, decision making, work habits and orientation towards time, and second, on "the development of interpersonal interactions skills." In her acknowledgements, the author expresses a "hope that, as students interact with the curriculum and with each other, personal empowerment skills and a sense of purpose will emerge and their feelings of self-worth will be enhanced and validated."

Each segment of *WISEP* begins with a brief overview of goals for that lesson and an extensive bulleted outline of facts, key ideas, and other information drawn from psychology and other social sciences. These outlines are followed by lists of possible classroom activities. The lists include using sitcom and other television material to identify communication strengths and weakness, performing skills exercises, and guided meditations or reflections.

The segment on "The Family" contains a wealth of sociological information. Among this section's goals are: to help students to "examine differences and diversities in family lifestyles and structures"; to "determine how family rules and rituals imprint self-esteem and values"; to "consider how generating acceptance for family and cultural differences impact self-esteem and value development"; and to "explore helpful ways to resolve conflict"

(Family, p. 1). *WTSEP* unambiguously presents the growing numbers of single parent families as a risk factor for children. Other enumerated risks to children include maternal addictions, homelessness, parental violence, poor foster care, family mobility, and latchkey lives (Family, pp. 3-10). Under "Future Predictions," students are told that some forecasters predict, "lifetime monogamy will become a rare exception," while others "predict that because of delayed marriage trend there will be a return to more stable and enduring marriage." In general, this unit stresses that closeness to parents and other family members (especially living with both biological parents), delayed sexual intercourse, and going to church are factors that are associated with lower "behavior risks" for young people.[1]

The "Communications" segment has 12 objectives. These include identifying "conflict areas and healthy ways of resolving conflict" and "interact[ing] with activities designed to model effective" personal skills (Communications, p. 1). *WTSEP* also presents archetypes of bad communication: "Judges," "beggars," "scientists," "escape artists," and "generals" are all contrasted with "levelers," or those who can identify and express their own and others' feelings. The importance of non-verbal communication is also stressed. Robert Bolton's "Collaborative Problem Solving Guide" is highlighted, along with his "Barriers to Communication," such as name-calling, diagnosing, ordering, threatening, and moralizing. In a remarkably complete and well explained compilation of communication theory, John Powell's ideas of "levels of communication" and Edward Hall's "Elements of Communication" are presented, along with Virginia Satir's theories of stress communication.[2]

The Oklahoma Marriage Initiative

Oklahoma's marriage education initiative stems from the office of Governor Frank Keating, in conference and collaboration with civic leaders and clergy from around the state. In contrast to Florida, Oklahoma has not yet brought a major new marriage bill before the legislature. Rather, before bringing legislation forward, Governor Keating is creating an interim legislative study on high divorce rates in his state. (Oklahoma ranks second in the nation in divorce) and is convening leaders to "brainstorm strategic plans...to strengthen marriage."

In his effort to stimulate a culture of marital permanence, Keating has set aside 10 million dollars in TANF funds to support various pro-marriage pilot programs. For example, using the Marriage Savers "Community Marriage Policy," as an archetype, pastors and civic leaders will develop community pilot projects in marriage education and mentoring. Churches, universities and schools will also be encouraged to offer pre-marital counseling and relationship skills training. And finally, various relationship skills curricula will be offered to schools in partnership with the state Department of Education. This means that the state will provide marriage education tools and training for interested Oklahoma school districts, and fund evaluations of these curricula.'

Joanne Eason, Senior Project Manager at Public Strategies (a think tank hired by the governor to help design and promote the new marriage initiative), believes these experiments will go far toward creating an educational culture more friendly to the idea of pre-marital training.[2]

1. Jerry Regier, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Human Services, 2000. Oklahoma Marriage Policy: A Strategic Plan
2 Interview with Joanne Eason, August 2000.

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The "Relationships" segment in Volume II presents 17 objectives for teaching good relationship skills. These include getting students to "examine the dimensions of friendship" to "explor[ing] different kinds of love styles as defined by Marcia Lasswell and Norman Lobsenz" (Relationships, p. 1). Wise also articulates the goal of analyzing "the dynamics of relationship styles and marital satisfaction." In this section, a menu of 28 activities is offered. One involves viewing the movie *Brian's Song*, then asking students to note the personality traits and varied relationships of the characters. Another involves role playing exercises in which students practice translating "you" messages into "I" messages. Students also view a video, *Sex: A Topic for Conversation*, in which Sol Gordon, a psychologist and author, talks about contraception and about why teenagers should postpone sexual activity, as well as about the use of condoms in preventing STDs.

While the "Teen Pregnancy Prevention" segment takes a morally non-judgmental stance toward teenage sex, it does, as do most current high school health textbooks, present a clear, balanced discussion of adolescent sexual responsibility in light of the medical and other risks associated with teen sex and pregnancy. Its objectives include "Examin[ing] pressures which encourage teens (sic) to become sexually active"; "assess[ing] teen pregnancy's impact on individuals, families and society"; and articulating reasons to postpone sexual involvement and parenthood (Teen Pregnancy, p. 1). Teaching strategies include using "The Empathy Belly" to simulate pregnancy and inviting speakers to discuss the health and emotional risks related to teen pregnancy as well as the risks to children from low birth weight, child abuse, and poverty. The "social consequences associated with out-of-wedlock pregnancy" are also outlined. Students are asked to view a video such as *School Boy Father*, or to hear a panel of adolescent parents talk about their experiences. Students then reflect on the relationships that have produced these children, and on whether teen fathers and mothers are able to meet "physical, intellectual, emotional, and moral development needs" of their children. The program emphasizes the importance of setting goals and stresses that teen pregnancy can disrupt a young person's personal goals. Students are also asked to calculate the public costs "to their country" of supporting families begun by adolescents. Finally, various birth control methods and methods of abortion are described."

The segment on "Personal and Family Crisis" lists 12 objectives, including helping students to understand "the impact of divorce on individuals, families and the larger society"; "analyz[ing] the trauma of a terminal illness"; and "examin[ing] the warning signs of suicide" (Personal and Family Crisis, p. 1). The overall theme of this segment is dealing with loss. As a result, topics such as relationship break-up and divorce are sandwiched between "signs and symptoms of depression" and "Death and Dying." Nevertheless, the divorce section informs students about the prevalence of divorce, its financial consequences, and children's psychological reactions. Divorce is portrayed as a traumatic event. Typical negative reactions of children in various age groups are detailed. The data sheet on step or blended families emphasizes that such families are increasingly common, that blended families frequently encounter "unexpected stress," and that it "takes time for family members to work out feelings."[11]

The lessons on marriage itself are quite brief and subsumed entirely under the broader rubric of "Relationships." For example, students are asked to compile a list of behaviors that they could not tolerate in a spouse. They are warned about danger signs in a possible mate, including "If you spend most of your time together arguing even though you really miss each other when you're apart"; and "If you keep having thoughts like 'Maybe things will get better after we're married.'"[12]

Evaluation

Does WISEP *have a marriage focus? Grade: C.*

WISEP is intended to promote mental health and self-esteem.[56] While its treatment of divorce is careful and effective, and while romance is frequently addressed in the program, marriage itself gets short shrift.

Does WISEP *convey to students that marriage is beneficial and important? Grade: C.*

WISEP offers few reasons why students might wish eventually to marry. Thus, the program does not adequately help them to choose intelligently between marriage and its alternatives. It offers no discussion of the rewards of marriage as opposed to cohabitation, for example, and suggests few role models for family life beyond a general condemnation of traditional gender roles in marriage. On the other hand, the problems often associated with family fragmentation, especially poverty and the suffering experienced by children whose parents divorce, receive strong attention.

Is WISEP *comprehensive in its treatment of marriage? Grade: B.*

Like most current high school health textbooks, *WISEP's* family life units are built almost exclusively on medical and therapeutic paradigms. Accordingly, the program confidently urges students to make individual sexual "choices" that are likely to minimize physical and other personal health risks, but carefully refrains from identifying those same choices as morally good, or even as corresponding to inherited cultural guidance that deserves to be respected.

WISEP conveys accurate information on the effects of unwed childbearing and divorce on children and, to a lesser extent, on society as a whole. It teaches relationship skills and suggests ways in which teachers can use fiction, from videos to TV sitcoms to movies, to help students identify negative and positive communication patterns. The program discusses the role of rituals and traditions in connecting family members,[57] and also features a lesson on betrothal, identified as the pre-marital period during which engaged people first "interact...with the community" as a couple.[58] But *WISEP's* treatment of marriage is limited and fragmented — a shortcoming which tends to render unnecessarily obscure, for example, the important points that the program seeks to make about divorce and unwed childbearing. One California teacher who thinks highly of *WISEP*, and uses it in an elective Health and Family Living Course for 11th and 12th graders, reports that she supplements this program's Communications and Relationships units with more direct discussions of marriage.[59]

Is WISEP *age-appropriate? Grade: B.*

WISEP presents more classroom activities than most high school marriage education programs, and the variety of different classroom activities seems well targeted. In Merced, California, which integrates Volume I of *WISEP* into its 9th grade social studies curriculum, one teacher expressed both support for the program as well as the need to pare down the often-complex psychological concepts so that younger students can understand them.[60] Thus, the greatest strength of this curriculum, its intellectual rigor and therapeutic comprehensiveness, may also be, at times, something of a liability.

Does WISEP *promote habits of character which are likely to enhance marriageability? Grade: B.*

WISEP separates its comparatively long discussion of romantic relationships from its discussion of marriage. In general, the program defines and describes relationships, both mar-

ital or nonmarital, in terms of their success in meeting the emotional and other needs of the individuals involved. Even in its conflict resolution units, *WISEP* avoids normative discourse, carefully portraying interpersonal disputes essentially as conflicts between equally valid personal "needs."[41] This lack of clear behavioral guidance is a weakness, as is the program's relatively cursory treatment of marriage proper. In its "Relationships" unit and elsewhere, however, *WISEP* does stress the importance of "emotional maturity" in successful love relationships, and defines emotional maturity not only as self-knowledge, independence, and coping, but also responsibility, consideration, inclusion, respect, honesty, perseverance, fairness, and a "willingness to accept blame."[42]

Building Relationships: Developing Skills for Life

Description

Building Relationships is written by David Olson, with John DeFrain and Amy K. Olson. David Olson is the developer of the *PREPARE/ENRICH* programs for adults, and a family scholar and author at the University of Minnesota. John DeFrain is a professor of family sci-

A Teacher on WISEP

Students love WISEP. They are looking for a place to process issues and stresses. This is a very deep program. The only problem is that a lot of teachers need training in interactive teaching models. With a program like WISEP, the classroom has to be a safe enough place to share. These are sensitive subjects, and with the wrong teachers, kids could get the wrong information.

I believe that self-esteem is tied to everything, so I emphasize self-esteem as the basis of good relationships. This generation doesn't know what a good relationship looks like. They don't see commitment, or people talking through a problem together. Sometimes I'm hard pressed to get kids to see there is a need for marriage. I have supplemented the WISEP materials on marriage with a model wedding, and have brought a pre-marital counselor into the classroom. With that and communications skills, you can at least scratch the surface.

Kids really understand Dr. Bessell's relationship models though. They see the importance of emotional maturity in relationships. We discuss the difference between love and infatuation, and what love really is. When they come in, they don't have a clue, but especially with the younger kids if you break it down and if you reinforce it in different ways...they do get it. I really worry about the teen parents, though. I stress communications skills and gender differences with them, because they are in and out of relationships.

It's interesting working with Hispanic and South East Asian kids who come from large extended families. You have to be sensitive on issues of gender and marriage customs, and on definitions of abuse too. They are trying to respect American culture, and we have to respect their cultures. Some of these kids challenge the idea that you have to be in love to be married. They have seen arranged marriages that are successful, and are convinced you can make marriage work without the [personal] chemistry. I just tell them that these are all theories [we are teaching], and they don't have to accept them. I see their challenge as a [positive] sign of comfort in the classroom. They are open to new ideas, yet they respect their own cultures.

-Tina Raglin, Merced, California

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ence at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the co-author, with David Olson, of a widely used college-level textbook on marriage and the family." The accompanying teacher's manual for this program is written by David H. Olson, Luke Knutson, and Amy K. Olson. *Building Relationships* is used in 400 to 500 schools, mainly in Utah and Minnesota."

The goal of *Building Relationships* is to "help people learn about how to build relationships with others, including peers and family" through descriptions of "healthy relationship attitudes and ideas," and through presentations about such "relationship skills" as "assertiveness, active listening and conflict resolution" (p. iii). The curriculum is divided into 13 chapters covering five major topic areas: an "overview of marriage"; "dating and marriage preparation"; "stages of family life"; "relationship skills"; and "common relationship issues" (Teacher's Manual, p. 1).

The authors stress the importance of good premarital education and preparation, including taking a premarital "inventory" such as the one developed by Olson for the *PREPARE/ENRICH* program. Each chapter in *Building Relationships* begins with an "AWARE" section, essentially a quiz consisting of ten true/false propositions designed to test the student's current knowledge. For example, the opening quiz for Chapter 3, on "Love and Marriage," includes such propositions as: "The single best predictor of a successful marriage is the age of the couple" (True); "Living together before marriage (cohabiting) helps couples develop a more satisfying marriage" (False); and "Communication is the most useful and important skill couples can develop" (True).

The teacher's manual recommends a variety of classroom activities, including class discussion, brainstorming, role-playing, and "life-skills activities" for outside the classroom. Life skill assignments primarily involve interviewing parents or other married people, polling peers, or administering to others some version of classroom assignments, such as the AWARE quiz. They also include analyzing the flexibility of one's family's rules and leadership, prioritizing lists of values, constructing a personal budget, evaluating the strengths of one's dating relationships, and even acting as "mock" parents, caring for a raw egg over the course of a weekend.

Evaluation

Does Building Relationships *have a marriage focus? Grade: A.*

Building Relationships has a strong focus on marriage. Although strengthening marriage is not mentioned as one of the formal goals of the program (see "Goals for this Book" page ii), the first five chapter-lessons are explicitly about marriage, and the last half of the book, devoted to communication skills, role relationships, sex, and financial decision making, directly connect these issues to marriage.

Does Building Relationships *convey to students that marriage is beneficial and important? Grade: C.*

Building Relationships frequently exhibits ambivalence regarding marriage. On the one hand, the sheer volume of material on marriage in this text conveys to students the message that marriage matters. The authors quote Dr. David R. Mace, who said: "Nothing in the world could make human life happier than to greatly increase the number of strong marriages" (p. 56).

Yet, apart from emotional fulfillment, no important reasons for marriage are presented in this program. In addition, numerous warnings about the risk of marriage, some of them potentially misleading, lend a sense of pessimism to the curriculum. For example: "Marriage

is very risky and it is hard to achieve and maintain a happy marriage" (p. 12). And: "Marriage is a risky proposition. Conflict is inevitable, and the likelihood of divorce is high" (p. 49). And: "Although economic security has been a traditional reason for marrying, it has few merits today. With half or more of today's marriages likely to end in divorce, young people simply cannot afford to be dependent financially on their spouses" (p. 47)." And: "In this country getting into a bad marriage is much easier than getting out of one" (p. 63).

Building Relationships also delivers mixed and at times scientifically misleading messages about the importance of marriage and the two-parent home for children's well being. For example, in the chapter on, "Marriage and Families Today" the authors report that "[f]amily types are as varied as the individuals who live in families," then conclude that: "No one type of family is better than any other." *Building Relationships* does describe single parenthood as difficult for adults, but not without also stressing the point that "In many cases a healthy single-parent family is better" than a two-parent family. Such cases include those "where one parent, for example, is alcoholic or has been physically abusive" (p. 104). The most powerful reason the authors give for why "a strong marriage is the foundation for a strong family" — that fathers "can [sic] be very important in their children's development" (p.112) — is less convincing than it would be were the authors less tentative in their statements on family structure in general."

Is Building Relationships *comprehensive?*
Grade: C

Building Relationships offers instruction in some useful conflict resolution and relationship skills, including the use of "I statements," active listening, and "fair fighting" techniques. A classroom transparency recommends "Daily Dialogues" and "Daily Compliments" as "two ways of keeping a relationship exciting and healthy." For the Daily Dialogue, couples are urged to set aside 5 minutes a day (and 15 minutes on weekends) to discuss what was most enjoyable and most dissatisfying about their relationship on that day. A Daily Compliment "highlights the positive things" in the relationship and helps prevent it "from becoming routine" (Teacher's Manual, p. 26).

The authors fail to cite much of the social science evidence that would have strengthened the rationale of their marriage-focused curriculum and added to its intellectual breadth and depth. The large body of evidence on the importance of marriage to individual well being, for example, is largely ignored." And in light of recent sociological research, the text probably over-emphasizes both the risks of early marriages and the advantages of late ones." At the same time, *Building Relationships* devotes fully five pages to the question, "Does living together prepare couples for

Utah's Marriage Skills Education Initiative

In April, the New York Times erroneously reported that Utah requires marriage skills classes in schools.[1] Utah does not require marriage education in schools, but mandating it isn't the only way to encourage it. 95% of Utah schools apparently offer a course on "Adult Roles and Responsibilities," which has a marriage skills component. The state has included this course on its approved list of instruction, and one county, Wayne County, requires the class for graduation. Dr. Brent Barlow, Chair of the Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage estimates about 20% of the state's juniors and seniors, take the course.

In October of 1999, Renee Hyer, State Family and Consumer Sciences Education Specialist, brought marriage researcher David Olson to Utah for a one-day seminar. Olson introduced his Building Relationships: Developing Skills for Life text to about 125 high school and middle school teachers. "[That] course is growing in popularity with both male and female students," says Dr. Barlow. "In some classes as many as 40 percent are young men."[2]

1. Pam Belluck, "States Declare War on Divorce Rates, Before Any 'I Dos'" New York Times, April 21, 2000, p. A1.
2. Interview with Brent Barlow, August 2000.

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marriage?" Answer: No. The text is clear and direct on this topic, informing young people accurately regarding the discouraging correlations between premarital cohabitation and marital instability.

Literature or other forms of story play almost no role in *Building Relationships*, unless you count a poem by Kahil Gibran: "Love one another, but make not a bond of love/Let it be rather a moving sea between the shores of your souls" (p. 245). The authors make almost no effort to educate students in any aspect of marriage as a cultural institution. While the program frequently offers common sense guidance on the importance of commitment, compatibility, friendship, diplomacy, maturity, and even religious faith in lasting marriages, some of its prescriptions seem gratuitous or off the cuff, such as when the authors sternly warn students against falling into traditional gender roles," or when they assert that "[t]oo much togetherness can lead to such negative behaviors as trying to control the partner and failing to appreciate the partner" (p. 42).

Is Building Relationships *age-appropriate? Grade: B.*

The *Building Relationships* textbook is eminently readable, and the activities generally well chosen for high school students, especially those that involve asking students to interview their parents or other adults about their views and experiences with marriage. Yet, the program consciously attempts to de-romanticize courtship and marriage, presumably to prevent young people from bringing into marriage unrealistic expectations of eternal happiness. Large-type pullouts bear warnings such as: "Love is a poor predictor of who will stay married" (p. 68). And: "Romantic love tends to fade after marriage" (p. 85). And: "Having children can have a negative effect on a couple's marriage" (p. 108). Each of these statements does capture a truth, at least for many couples. But gathered together, as an overall body of truths about marriage, they constitute depressing news for teenagers who yearn someday to fall and stay in love. Such frequently negative generalizations about the likelihood of marital distress and failure dull the appeal and value of this program for high school students.

Does Building Relationships *promote habits of character which are likely to enhance marriageability? Grade: C.*

Building Relationships does outline those personal qualities and virtues which make for good marriage material, such as emotional maturity, commitment, tact, and financial responsibility. But the ways in which the authors disregard the possibility of regenerating romantic love within marriage seems to amount to a misrepresentation of the potential of marriage. In this program, as in numerous others of these curricula, marriage tends overall to be portrayed as dull, hard work, with elusive rewards.

This program's treatment of teenage sexuality is weak and one-sided. It amounts to little more than an intellectually behind-the-curve affirmation of comprehensive sex education, contraceptive clinics in schools, and lessons in safe sex. No support is offered for behavioral norms such as teenage sexual abstinence or premarital sexual chastity, despite current evidence suggesting that, for example, the lower the levels of women's premarital sexual activity, the higher their levels of sexual satisfaction in marriage.[11]

Also, the program may over-emphasize the importance of compatible personality traits in marriage. *Building Relationships* tends to portray stressful marriages as problems to be avoided by careful mate selection, rather than as relationship conflicts that can, with effort, be resolved. Here is an item from the curriculum (p. 87) on "Premarital Fantasies and Marital Realities:"

She married him because he was such an assertive male.
She divorced him because he was such a domineering husband.

He married her because she was so gentle and petite.
He divorced her because she was so weak and helpless.

She married him because he could provide a good income.
She divorced him because all he did was work.

He married her because she was so attractive all the time.
He divorced her because she spent too much time in front of the mirror...

But such traits are not destiny. Reporting the results of his study following newlywed couples over several years, John Gottman observes that differing personality traits do not necessarily or fundamentally "discriminate distressed from nondistressed couples." Rather: "When a marriage is not going well, people perceive their partner's personality as a problem...As issues arise and become implacable...people try to explain them in terms of their partner's perceived personality inadequacies."[52]

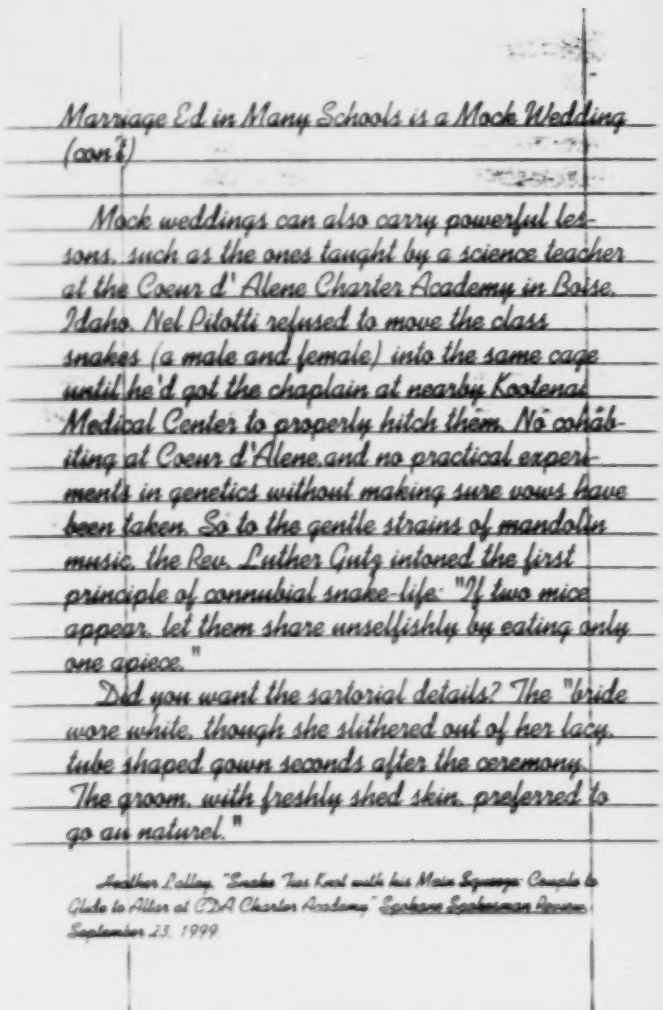
Partners

Description

Partners was developed by the Family Law Section of the American Bar Association. The ten-week program blends instruction in family law with an emphasis on communications skills. The program's main aim is to "help young people in making appropriate lifetime choices and maintaining their relationships." The program also, "it is hoped," will help to "reduce the rate of divorce" (Teacher's Manual, p. 1).

Partners is the first, and still one of the few, classroom marriage courses that makes preventing divorce a specific goal. Course objectives include providing students "with practical information to help them make informed choices about their life partner"; exposing students "to the legal system for dissolving marriages"; outlining "those identifiable problems that often lead to divorce/marital dissolution"; stressing the "impact of marital dissolution on the participants and their children"; and teaching students "the importance of positive communications styles" and "the destructive impact of negative communication styles." According to the American Bar Association, *Partners* is now used in about 100 schools in 35 states.[53]

The course is organized into five units, each consisting of two 50-minute classroom lessons. Each unit begins with a 20-minute video presenting one aspect of family law and one communication skill.[54] In each segment, students are given "an example of negative communication between Jim and Liz, a young couple with a baby who have been married for two years." The resulting conflict leads either Jim or Liz to consult


Marriage Ed in Many Schools is a Mock Wedding (cont'd)

Mock weddings can also carry powerful lessons, such as the ones taught by a science teacher at the Coeur d' Alene Charter Academy in Boise, Idaho. Nel Pitotti refused to move the class snakes (a male and female) into the same cage until he'd got the chaplain at nearby Kootenai Medical Center to properly hitch them. No cohabiting at Coeur d'Alene and no practical experiments in genetics without making sure vows have been taken. So to the gentle strains of mandolin music, the Rev. Luther Gutz intoned the first principle of connubial snake-life: "If two mice appear, let them share unselfishly by eating only one apiece."

Did you want the sartorial details? The "bride wore white, though she slithered out of her lacy, tube shaped gown seconds after the ceremony. The groom, with freshly shed skin, preferred to go au naturel."

Heather Lalley, "Snake Ties Knot with his Main Squeeze: Couple to Glide to Altar at CDA Charter Academy," Spokane Spokesman Review, September 23, 1999

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The Case for Skills, by Diane Sollee

When Florida passed new legislation requiring "marriage and relationship skills" in high school, some marriage advocates were skeptical. Can schools really teach marriage? How can matrimony be reduced to a set of "skills"? What about love, commitment, compatibility, and morality? What about marriage as a sacred vocation?

These concerns reflect the traditional belief that marriage is about love, finding the right person, character, maturity, morality, and spirituality. These concerns thus form the basis for what we typically tell engaged couples. You are entering into a serious, sacred union. You must love and care for your partner, remain faithful, and work on your marriage. But sadly, we now have to add: "And you have a 50-50 chance of making it."

Clearly we need a new approach. And the logical place to start is with young people, since they are trying to figure things out before they face decisions about entering, or avoiding, what many of them currently see as "the whole love and marriage mess."

They are confused. They see their parents, teachers, coaches, and ministers as moral and responsible people who, by and large, were able to keep their promises and reach their goals. Except in one area: marriage. They have seen the wedding albums; they know that most couples start out very much in love. They struggle to comprehend the reasons why this beautiful bride or that handsome groom, their mom or dad, somehow turned out not to be the "right person" after all, or why this particular couple somehow "grew apart."

In many cases it is easier — less painful — for these young people to question marriage itself. After all, who are they to think that they can somehow be more moral, more committed, more in love, better able to choose the "right person," than today's generation of adults?

Many young people today have concluded that it must be marriage that kills love. So they decide to avoid it altogether. They will cohabit, thus out-foxing the contaminated institution. Or worse, they will simply resign themselves to the facts. Marriage is a crapshoot. The odds are about 50-50. So sure, they will marry, but if things don't work out, no problem. They'll get a no-fault divorce and go out and try again.

We must get the great good news out to these kids: It doesn't have to be this way. We have exciting new information for them that was not available to their parents and grandparents. It turns out that, yes, marriage is about love, commitment, compatibility, vows, maturity, morality, faith — all of these things. But marriage is also about specific skills, or (if you prefer) behaviors. Research has discovered that there are identifiable behaviors that can help them to keep their vows and to keep their love alive. There are concrete skills that can help them to find and keep "the right person" right.

These behaviors break down abstract concepts like love and commitment, responsibility and fidelity, into manageable steps. They show what love and commitment look like. They show young people how to "do" married love in ways that, we know with

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confidence, will make their marriage stronger. Today, researchers and teachers can give students a list of the behaviors that are highly predictive of marital success, and of marital failure. And we can teach these key behaviors — those regarding handling conflict, integrating change, and expressing appreciations — through simple classroom exercises. Young people today can actually change their odds.

They are entitled to know how to keep their marriages healthy, just as they are entitled to know how to keep their bodies healthy, or entitled to know how to earn a living. They need to know that researchers can actually look at the behaviors of engaged couples discussing an issue and predict, with over 90 percent accuracy, which marriages will last, and which won't. And we can even teach children of divorce the skills that will help them make it to the beautiful moment of "till death us do part." That is romantic. That is spiritual. That is a way to turn around their cynicism and despair.

Students also need to understand that research shows that these crucial skills are best taught to them as a couple. Accordingly, even if one or both of the future spouses took a course back in high school, they need also to take a course together, as a couple, before they marry.

A good marriage education course identifies what to expect in marriage. It provides a detailed road map of the expected curves, peaks and valleys. The couple can thus benefit from refresher courses as they face these turns in the road — the first year, the first baby, kids entering school, raising teenagers, emptying the nest, and the "for better and for worse" of sickness, success, fame, unemployment, poverty, commuter marriages, the birth of a challenged child, or the death of a child or loved one. All of these challenges are handled better with skills.

A good marriage education curriculum also includes information on why marriage is important, why it matters, including how getting and staying married will benefit them and their children. And it spells out the many ways in which cohabitation does not provide the protections and advantages of marriage; in fact, love erodes more precipitously in cohabiting unions.

It is also encouraging to students when they hear that the skills-based marriage curricula fit with the ideal of egalitarian marriages in which women work and men change diapers and in which both spouses take active roles in doing the work of maintaining the relationship. These courses are not about rolling back the clock or undermining hard-won rights.

We now have it in our grasp to help young people become part of a marriage renaissance built on new knowledge and new optimism. Many good relationship and marriage curricula already exist. Many more are in development. They are manual and exercise-based, and require little or no teacher training. They are cost-effective. They are being taught all across the country in both public and private schools to children of all classes and races. But they are still taught on a hit or miss basis. Too few policy makers are aware of their existence.

We can continue our current approach of telling young people that marriage is important and for life, but that half of you are going to fail. Or we can equip them to succeed.

Diane Sollee is founder and director of the Coalition for Marriage, Family, and Couples Education in Washington, D.C., and the convener of the annual Smart Marriages Conference (www.smartmarriages.com).

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a divorce attorney. The divorce attorney explains an important legal concept, while a communication expert analyzes the problems in Jim and Liz's communication. Jim and Liz then model the new communication skill. Each video segment ends with a homework assignment for the following week's class. Class discussion and in-class activities complete the program. Since *Partners* is typically sponsored by a domestic relations lawyer living in the school district area, teachers often invite that lawyer-consultant to participate in the class.

Unit I discusses the marriage contract and grounds for divorce as well as "Talking Tips" and the art of listening. Unit II discusses child support obligations and the ground rules for a "Fair Fight for Change." Unit III presents custody and visitation law along with the concept of an "anger release" tool, which allows a spouse to express anger or frustration about a nonmarital issue. Unit IV explains domestic violence law and "assertive expression" with regard to a marital issue. Unit V explores the chief causes of divorce and teaches a variety of skills to help relationships, including "Daily Sharing," the "Temperature Reading," and advice on "Choosing a Mate." Most of the exercises in the program involve legal discussions, situational role-play, and journaling; students are also asked to construct a budget and research certain legal topics.

Evaluation

Does Partners *have a marriage focus? Grade: B.*

While reducing divorce is a goal of *Partners*, the program lacks a consistent marriage focus. In this regard, vocabulary is revealing. The words "life partners" often replaces "husband," "wife," or "spouse." Perhaps because the program is for high school students, the role-playing exercises involve dating couples who are not considering marriage. But why not role-play spouses? Half of the curriculum is devoted to family law issues, such as child support, custody, and domestic violence, that apply equally to married, cohabiting, and dating couples.

Does Partners *convey to students that marriage is beneficial and important? Grade: C.*

This curriculum states plainly that divorce is risky for parents and children. Liz and Jim are told by lawyers that a divorce would be harmful to their daughter. At the same time, due to its focus on poor communication, divorce law, and domestic violence, marriage as a life vocation is presented in largely negative terms. Poor Liz and Jim, whose conflicts form the basis of the program, seem to have everything going against them. They are young, immature, and poorly educated. Both work low-level jobs with long hours. They have a baby and unreliable child care arrangements. They are financially vulnerable. Jim is occasionally prone to physical violence.[5] After spending ten weeks with this couple, who seem tied to a wearying treadmill of marital conflict, even the most starry-eyed adolescent might be prompted to wonder, "Why marry at all?" No answer to this question is offered in this curriculum.

Is Partners *comprehensive? Grade: C.*

Half of the curriculum is devoted to a discussion of general issues in family law. The rest is devoted largely to relationships skills concerning dating, not marriage. While the role of the law in regulating divorce is prominently displayed, the role of the law in regulating or strengthening marriage is not a topic; nor is there any broader discussion of the role of marriage as a social institution, or of the functions marriage serves in protecting children, adults and society. No scholarly research documenting the benefits of marriage or the risks of non-marriage and divorce is included. Other than the scripted video interactions, there are no narratives, with the exception of O. Henry's short story, "The Gift of the Magi," which is assigned as homework.

Is Partners *age-appropriate? Grade: C.*

Some of the situational role-play can be crude, as when a boy "shares" with his girlfriend that "her haircut makes Her [sic] look fat and that She [sic] is darn [sic] lucky that He [sic] goes out with her."* Also, *Partners'* focus on specific communication scripts may be a hard sell in a classroom setting. One Family and Consumer Science teacher from Pennsylvania who likes the program and used it last year in her Parenting and Family course, reported some difficulty with the scripts. Her students balked at practicing them, commenting: "Let's be realistic. Are we really going to sit down and say these things?" The program also prompted a class discussion of whether it might not be better to cohabit, rather than risk the legal entanglements of marriage."

Is it wise for a high school marriage education curriculum to portray newlyweds consulting divorce lawyers? Each time Liz and Jim face a relationship crisis, one of them consults a lawyer, who tells him or her not to divorce, but instead to learn how to communicate more constructively. Do lawyers in the real world typically do the same?

Does Partners *promote habits of character which are likely to enhance marriageability? Grade: B.*

One teacher we interviewed observed that a few students in her class took sides in Liz

A Teacher on Partners

Three years ago, I attended a state leadership meeting where I was introduced to Partners. I liked it immediately. In my district, there is a one-course requirement for graduation in parenting and family life. I liked the way the program talked about the individual, and his role in the family, and the way it combined information on the legal responsibilities of family life with positive communications skills. I think that positiveness is needed in a relationship to keep it intact.

It's difficult for students to accept communications skills like "I statements." On the other hand, they have grown up in a world where they pretty much think they have the right to say whatever they are feeling, no matter how insensitive. That's the model they have from TV, and a lot of parents and peers. Then they are faced with the problem of how far they can go before they've gone too far and risked the relationship! When they tell me "Let's be realistic. Are we really going to sit down and [use the Talking Tips]," I answer, "Try to follow this through. It will vary [from the model]." I feel my job is to plant some seeds. You can't change an individual in a few weeks. And married life is more than just communications skills. Work, money management, and the household etc. have to come together, and there is nurturing. But Partners gets them to think more critically about issues they will face in getting along with family members. One girl even took the tape home to her parents, and her parents appreciated it.

Kids have to make choices based on a foundation of knowledge. Some of the kids responded to the legal discussion by saying they could avoid the whole problem of divorce by living together. I brought in some statistics on cohabitation, and on the importance of family structure in child well being. The program has also stimulated some class discussion about what to look for in a boyfriend or a girlfriend, and they've gotten some good pointers.

- Sandra Kokinda, Lehighton, PA

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and Jim's conflicts, rather than recognizing the need for the Liz and Jim to compromise and communicate more effectively. Because of the hostility evident in the video encounters, this program, especially, requires a teacher capable of carefully unpacking the material. At the same time, there are valuable insights to be gleaned from this program, especially regarding physical violence, managing anger, and the importance of self-restraint.

Connections: Relationships and Marriage

Description

Connections: Relationships and Marriage is used in approximately 400 schools in 35 states.[7] It is the first — and in our view better — of the two relationship skills programs written by Charlene Kamper and published by the Dibble Fund for Marital Enhancement.[8]

Connections: Relationships and Marriage aims to help young people "develop a clear understanding of the components of close meaningful interpersonal relationships." These components include handling conflict, communicating honestly about ideas and feelings, and demonstrating "genuine caring." The author states that "these skills become the foundation for one of the most significant relationships [students] will enter, that of marriage" (Teacher's Manual p.vii). The course "is about establishing healthy, happy, stable relationships with family, friends, teachers, boy/girlfriends, and eventually husbands and wives" (Teacher's Manual, p vi).

The instructional package includes a teacher's manual, a student workbook, "The Kiersey Temperament Sorter," "Marriage Unit Game Cards," and overhead transparencies. Teachers may also rent the video, *You Can Marry for Keeps*. *Connections: Relationship and Marriage* is divided into 15 units: three on personality, three on relationships, two on communication, and seven on marriage. This curriculum employs some of the same instructional strategies as *Connections: Dating and Emotions*. These include brainstorming, class discussion, small groups and partnering, lectures, role-playing, and worksheets.

The three lessons on personality are designed to "help students recognize and value... personality differences" (Teacher's Manual, p. 1); to "identify the needs that motivate and shape behavior and influence personality" (p. 5); and to "learn to plan and set goals for the future" (p. 9). Abraham Maslow's famous "hierarchy of needs" is discussed, and students are urged to consider how needs change over the life course. The student workbook asks students to answer questions such as: "If I could decorate my bedroom any way I wanted to, it would look like..." And: "I handle conflict by..." Students also create their own "Plan for Life," focusing on career, educational, and financial goals, as well as their plans for health, home life, personal fulfillment, retirement, and aging (Student Workbook, pps. 1-8).

Lessons Four through Six comprise the relationships module of the course. Lesson Four teaches how time affects relationships between family members, including parents, siblings, and spouses. Lesson Five asks students to reflect on "attractions" and to create a "clear concept of one's ideal person" in order to help "guide dating choices." The importance of friendship and maturity are stressed. Lesson Six, on "Dating and Emotions and Breaking Up," asks students to assess "the quality of dating relationships" and helps students to identify "problem areas" and end "unhealthy relationships."

Lesson Seven focuses on identifying family communication problems, or attitudes that make conflict resolution difficult. (For example: "You believe you must be right."[9]) Lesson Eight focuses on speaking and listening skills, asking students to identify verbal and nonverbal cues that signal whether or not a person is listening, and to practice paraphrasing each others' remarks.

The five final lessons focus on marriage. Students are asked to define healthy love and its components and to identify different kinds of love, such as infatuation, fantasy love, friendship, and "complete" love (Student Workbook pp. 33-35). They are warned against "The Seven Most Prevalent Causes of Faulty Mate Selection": marrying too quickly; marrying too young; being "too eager to marry"; "choosing a mate to please someone else"; lacking experience; having "unrealistic expectations" of marriage; and harboring "unaddressed significant personality and behavior problems" (Teacher's Manual, p. 45). Picking the right partner and marrying for the right reasons are portrayed as the most likely path to marital success. Other modules ask students to "marry" a classmate and then discuss together the impact of children on the marriage, the importance of finances and budgeting, the importance of "learning the skills necessary to cope" with crises (Teacher's Manual, p. 69), and the importance of having fun together as a family, including planning family vacations.

Evaluation

Does Connections: Relationships and Marriage *have a marriage focus? Grade: A.*

In its title, goals, and content, *Connections: Relationship and Marriage* maintains an admirably clear marriage focus, discussing dating in the context of eventual mate selection, and devoting close to half the instructional content directly to marriage. While this curriculum bears the imprint of some of the same psychologists and scholars — such as Eric Erikson, Virginia Satir, John Allen Lee, Robert J. Sternberg, Neil Clark Warren, John M. Gottman and David H. Olson — whose work informs other marriage programs, Kamper handles psychotherapeutic information deftly and with a light hand. Appropriately, her main emphasis is on the practical challenges of married life.

Does Connections: Relationships and Marriage *convey to students that marriage is beneficial and important? Grade: A.*

This program conveys an optimistic tone regarding the possibility for stable, rewarding, loving lifetime unions. For example, it is the only curriculum that presents Robert J. Sternberg's definition of three basic elements of healthy love — intimacy, passion and commitment — in a way that makes it stand out plainly as the central message of what married love should be.

Is Connections: Relationships and Marriage *comprehensive in its treatment of marriage? Grade: B.*

Connections: Relationships and Marriage offers a good introduction to relationship skills. It also introduces students to the idea that marriage is something more than a private relationship. However, apart from emotional satisfaction, the basic functions of marriage are not presented; nor does the program offer scientific evidence about the consequences of divorce and unmarried childbearing. While *Connections: Relationships and Marriage* is not a literature-based curriculum, students are introduced to compelling real-life marriage stories in the video, *You Can Marry for Keeps* (also evaluated separately below).

A Teacher on Connections: Relationships and Marriage

This is a very meaningful program for high school students without being too deep or scary. I teach in a regional high school with a diverse population, from the most to the least advantaged.

Connections focuses on marriage, it's attractive, kids respond well to the exercises and activities, and most importantly it challenges the romantic expectations kids have about marriage. They have to resolve conflicts in this program, and a lot of the frustrations of marriage are mirrored. Sure, I had to make the connection for them between the exercises and the real challenges of marriage. They don't make that connection themselves. But once it's pointed out, the program gives them some [conflict resolution] structure and experience. Connections is not just intellectual, it's activity oriented. It doesn't demand anything [average] kids are not ready to deal with. It meets kids where they are.

—Sherie Fuller Smith, Mount Grelock, MA

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Is Connections: Relationships and Marriage *age-appropriate? Grade: A.*

Kampner's communication skills lessons are not essentially different from those in *Partners* and *Building Relationships*. They introduce unhealthy communication styles, active listening techniques, and other familiar ground rules for successful conflict resolution. But while the skills and exercises are similar to those in the *Partners* and *Building Relationships* programs, the structure of *Connections* seems better adapted to the high school audience. For example, Kampner introduces her lessons on unhealthy communication styles not within the context of her treatment of marriage, but within the context of her treatment of dating and courtship, as preludes to her units on marriage. The result is that when her students are eventually faced with the assignment to solve a marital "crisis," they are equipped with positive relationship problem solving tools while remaining unburdened by consistently negative images of marriage.

The workbook is well adapted for a high school audience, with themes, games, quizzes and other attractive instructional tools. A Massachusetts teacher who chose *Connections* from among all the programs evaluated here called it "fun" and "meaningful," without being "scary" for students.[81] In general, the program is non-invasive.

Does Connections: Relationships and Marriage *promote habits of character which are likely to enhance marriageability? Grade: B.*

Connections: Relationships and Marriage seeks to involve young people in thinking ahead, in setting long-term goals for themselves. Although the program does not explicitly relate teen sexual behavior to the goals of marriage and family, it does encourage students to think about the connection between dating and the eventual goal of marriage. In this respect, marriage is not presented as a distant concern, but rather as an important life decision for which adolescents should plan.

This program also generally presents marriage not simply as a tough job, or as a long-term battle, but also as serious fun. There is an infectious good cheer in the lessons and in the activities.

Connections: Relationships and Marriage has been formally evaluated, and the results are decidedly mixed. According to the evaluator, students did not change much, as a result of taking the course, in terms of their ability to answer questions related to "curricular content." Students who have taken the course seem no more disposed toward premarital training than do peers in a control group, and are only slightly less likely to be accepting of divorce when children are present. Insofar as the goals of *Connections: Relationships and Marriage* are to promote "knowledge of successful relationship concepts" and "improve...attitudes toward marriage and [against] divorce," these goals seem to have been largely unmet. At the same time, students who have taken the course reported better communication with their parents and heightened inclinations to use "reasoning tactics" rather than aggression in handling interpersonal conflicts at home and at school.[82]

You Can Marry for Keeps

Description

You Can Marry For Keeps, produced by Sunburst Communications, consists of a video with an accompanying Teacher's Guide. Sunburst Videos sold about 700 copies of *You Can Marry For Keeps* from 1991 to 1994. Since then, direct sales have declined, although the video now is also packaged as a part of the *Connections: Relationships and Marriage Curriculum*.[83]

The video's goal is to "help viewers understand what marriage entails" and "how they themselves can effectively contribute toward building a solid marriage" by "analyzing actual problems and conflicts" and acquiring information on "mate selection and on means of resolving conflict." Learning objectives include getting students to "appreciate the realities of marriage and the uniqueness of this type of personal commitment"; to "learn how marital conflicts can be resolved"; to "understand marriage is an ongoing relationship that changes over a period of time"; to "understand that each marital experience is different"; and to "consider the differences between traditional and nontraditional male/female roles in marriage." Unlike many other programs, *You Can Marry for Keeps* explicitly aims to motivate viewers to greater marriage commitment. When marriage problems arise, says the Teachers' Guide, "rather than ask 'why stay?' . . .hopefully [viewers]... will only ask, 'Why go?'" (p. 3).

The teacher's guide offers 22 questions for discussion. Such as: "Why do you think it's important to realize that there are a number of people you can love that you wouldn't want to marry?" And: "What would you consider the difference, if any, between living with someone and marriage?" Of the twelve suggested classroom activities, one involves inviting a marriage counselor to discuss "the concept of marrying for keeps, and what is involved in the premarital counseling process." Another involves organizing a formal debate on the following proposition: "The age at which people can marry should be raised to twenty-one nationwide."[54]

The primary program content, however, is the video itself, presenting four real couples at different stages of married life. Winifred and Augustus Rhodes, for example, celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in style, with dinner, dancing, and a romantic kiss. Augustus declares:

It hasn't been tough to stay married. It's been enjoyable to me.[55]

Winifred has a more nuanced view:

I think at the end of 50 years you feel like you have finally accomplished something. And you look back and wonder, how did you do it? There's no recipe, there's no one secret.[56]

Winifred looks at her marriage as an "accomplishment." Her satisfaction, though expressed differently than her husband, after 50 years of marriage is also evident:

...Marriage, now, means friendship. It means understanding. To be able to understand when you're down, when you feel up, when you feel lost, to have somebody you can turn to. And [someone] who still respects you and loves you afterwards.[57]

While recognizing that differing role expectations can cause problems in a marriage, *You Can Marry for Keeps* does not, as do so many of these curricula, dogmatically insist upon similarity or sameness of roles in marriage.[58] Instead, the video shows how couples in different situations come to agreements on divvying up life's tasks.[59] In this way, *You Can Marry For Keeps* presents a different and broader vision of gender equity and of the marriage relationship — a vision of a bond between two people that is firm and impermeable on the outside, while remaining flexible and somewhat plastic on the inside. Perhaps the opening comment by newlywed Scott best captures the spirit of *You Can Marry for Keeps*:

When I was in high school, I thought of marriage as being this dungeon or a...big iron door that they threw you behind . . .And it's really not like that at all... We've had so much fun since we've been married..."[60]

Evaluation

Does You Can Marry For Keeps *have a marriage focus? Grade: A.*

While the course material is brief, this program is entirely devoted to a discussion of marriage, as its title suggests.

Does You Can Marry For Keeps *convey to students that marriage is beneficial and important? Grade: A*

Unlike most other marriage courses, *You can Marry for Keeps* explicitly aims to give viewers a "marriage vision" that makes marrying for keeps clearly preferable to alternatives.

Is You Can Marry For Keeps *comprehensive? Grade: C.*

You Can Marry for Keeps is based on personal stories that convey the kind of commitment, concern, flexibility, and faith that make it possible to stay married for life. Marriage as a public institution is briefly suggested, when the narrator, Marcia Laswell says: "Even a long-term living together situation is not the same thing as legal marriage." And also when she says: "Once you make that commitment before your friends and family and you publicly announce this, usually that gives you a different status" (Teacher's Guide, p. 28). However, scientific evidence about marriage is omitted. While relationship skills are not directly taught, the video does convey that communication help is available and desirable. As the narrator says: "Premarital counseling is one of the wisest things that couples can do" (Teacher's Guide, pp. 29-30).

Is You Can Marry For Keeps *age-appropriate? Grade: B.*

The video is easy to comprehend; the interviews are thought-provoking and inspiring. Yet one teacher we interviewed felt that there was not enough drama or conflict to keep students' attention. Another felt that, because it was filmed in the late 1980s, the fashions and hairstyles in the video appear to be outdated. As an independent curriculum, the program may be too brief. Packaging it with the *Connections: Relationship and Marriage* program may be a better way of bringing it to the classroom.

Does You Can Marry For Keeps *promote habits of character which are likely to enhance marriageability? Grade: A.*

You Can Marry For Keeps is unique among the programs we evaluated in that it offers young people powerful, real life models of honesty, self-restraint, courtesy, caring, respect, and marital love and commitment.

RQ: Relationship Intelligence (formerly Free Teens USA)

Description

The *RQ* course, written by Richard Panzer and published by the Center for Educational Media, consists of a text entitled, *RQ: Relationship Intelligence: Why your RQ is more Important to Your Success and Happiness than your IQ*. This seven-chapter textbook combines social science evidence with testimony from celebrity athletes and actors to make the case against sexual promiscuity and in favor of lifelong marriage.

The core component of this program, however, is a student workbook/journal divided into 17 units, with accompanying activities and questions for class discussion. *RQ*'s aim is to put forth "a positive vision of healthy relationships..."(Student Journal, p. 3). Panzer explains in his preface why he originally named his program *FREE Teens USA*:[1] "The concept of freedom is central to *RQ*. ...*None* of us can control what happens in the world...nor how others treat us, but we are free to choose our response to the actions of others...When every last vestige of your physical freedom has been taken away, one begins to really appreciate th[is] last freedom" (Student Journal, p. 3). According to the Center for Educational Media, *RQ* has been sold to schools and church groups in 35 different states.[2]

Florida's Marriage Initiative

In 1998, Florida passed its Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act, which requires schools to teach marriage and relationships skills as part of an existing required course in life management skills.

The high school marriage education mandate, however, is only a small part of a more comprehensive legislative initiative. Finding that "the state has a compelling interest in educating its citizens with regard to marriage and, if contemplated, the effects of divorce," the Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act encourages engaged couples to take premarital preparation courses (by providing a discount on marriage license fees to those who do), mandates a parenting course for divorcing couples, provides a number of informational services for families (including a marriage and family law handbook given to all couples who get marriage licenses), commissions a scholarly evaluation of marriage preparation courses, and launches a statewide longitudinal study of divorce patterns.

Yet, the new statute requiring "marriage and relationship skills-based education" in high school may do less than the legislature intended, since the statute does not specify the use of any supplemental curricular materials for this purpose. Moreover, the findings of the legislature in Section 2 of the Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act do not clearly distinguish marriage skills from other interpersonal communication skills. Rather, the authors of the bill state that "once learned, relationship skills [that] can facilitate communication between parties to a marriage and assist couples in avoiding conflict...are generalized to parenting, the workplace, schools, neighborhoods and civic relationships."

Thus, in a July 3, 1998 memo, David Mosrie, Director of the Florida Division of Public School and Community Education, effectively dismissed the marriage skills mandate on the basis that Florida's life management classes already covered interpersonal relationship skills. In a technical assistance memorandum directed to the state's District School Superintendents, Mosrie told them that no changes in curriculum content and no supplemental materials were required by the new mandate: "Department staff have reviewed the Course Description for Life Management Skills...and determined that the current concepts and content within the course description meet the intent of the [new marriage skills] amendment. The course performance standards include but are not limited to topics such as skills to enhance interpersonal relationships, skills to facilitate interpersonal communication, methods of dealing with interpersonal conflicts, skills for responsible decision-making processes, criteria for personal and family money management, family life education, including human sexuality, sexual abstinence, pregnancy prevention, and interpersonal coping skills."

Florida teachers may still choose to take advantage of new marriage education curricula such as those evaluated in this report and are entitled to receive reimbursement for the cost of self-selected materials. But, there are few indications that a critical mass of teachers are doing any more today with regard to marriage education than they did before the passage of the Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act.

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Educational strategies include lectures, readings, slide presentations, a comic book (described below), self-inventory exercises and student journaling. Readings include summaries of social science research on, for example, the risks of promiscuity, the benefits of marriage for adults (the joy of married sex receives considerable emphasis) and the risks of divorce and non-marriage for children and communities, supplemented by short testimonies from celebrity actors and athletes. But *RQ* also calls upon "the power of stories," using an eclectic assortment of brief excerpts from contemporary song lyrics, along with excerpts from Tolstoy, E.B. White, and O. Henry.

The workbook lessons are divided into four parts: Relationships, Personal Leadership, Interpersonal Relationships, and Community Leadership. The lesson on "Friendship" asks students to acknowledge that relationships can be healthy or unhealthy. (Student Journal, pp.11-13). The lesson on family relationships introduces the idea of the "emotional bank account," from *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families*. Deposits include "seeking first to understand" while withdrawals include "seeking first to be understood." "I-messages" are posited as another important relationship deposit, as is "forgiveness" as opposed to "holding grudges" (Student Journal, pp. 15-17). The lesson on "Initiation Rites" asks students to reflect on how one becomes a man or a woman. Students are asked to draw a "lifeline" describing all the significant things they have done and hope to do, including "high school, college, marriage, birth of children, start of job or career, etc." They are urged to write their own eulogy describing what they "wish others would be able to say" about them, and they analyze several letters to Ann Landers and Dear Abby describing the unwanted consequences of early sex. Stories of two teens who said "no" to early sex conclude the lesson, along with study questions such as "What are the 'shortcuts' some teens take to try to prove they're grown-up?" (Student Journal, p. 33).

In the lesson on "Understanding your Core Identity," students are asked to write the five things they would like to accomplish in life. Nelson Mandela's life is offered as an example of someone who chose to treat even his jailers as fellow human beings. Study questions include: "Which is more important—to be successful or to be good? Is being good an essential part of being a success?" And: "If someone mistreats you, what are the different ways you could choose to respond? Do you have to 'fight fire with fire'?" (Student Journal pp. 42-43). Lesson Five "Luck, Fate or Choice?" emphasizes students' own agency over their life choices, and Lesson Six "Attitude, Habits and Character Destiny" continues the lesson that while attitudes affect behavior, we are free to alter our attitudes. The lesson on "Dealing with Anger and other Emotions" offers relationship skills for conflict management, including Lori Gordon's "Volcano", a list of "Dirty Fighting" techniques, Steven Sozny's HEALS technique for diffusing rage, and a version of the "Fair Fight for Change," including speaker/listener techniques (Student Journal pp. 61-68).

The lesson on "Male and Female" makes the case for gender differences in communication, sexuality, and relationships skills, relying primarily on the work of Lilian Glass, Debra Tannen, and John Gray. Lesson Nine, "Five Star Sexuality," promotes an ideal of "mature, complete sexuality" that includes the achievement of intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual, as well as physical union. The idea is that marriage is the place where a union between two people can be most sexually satisfying. Lesson Ten introduces the ideas of "stages of intimacy." Josh Harris, author of *I Kissed Dating Good-Bye*, is profiled, along with a young adult couple that decided to wait until marriage because to them, "sex is special" (Student Journal, pp. 90-91). Lesson Eleven describes that stage of a relationship that follows initial romance: intimacy and connection, when passion subsides and two people see each other

more realistically, and yet continue to love. Excerpts from *The Velveteen Rabbit* and "The Gift of the Magi" are the basis for study questions, such as: "In the story, the Skin Horse says that when someone really loves you ...then you become real. What do you think this means?" And: "Jim and Della gave each other Christmas gifts that are now useless, but seem happy anyway. Why?"[7] The lesson on "Caretaking" emphasizes care that parents give children.

In "What's your Price Tag?" the importance of love and commitment before sex is emphasized. The lesson on "Marriage" urges teens who wish to marry to "prepare for it." The benefits of marriage are stressed, from the spiritual — marriage gives you "a fighting chance to make a lover of yourself, and not just in bed" — to the practical (marriage helps your health and income and increases your life expectancy)."[8] The disadvantages of cohabitation and premarital sex are outlined, and the costs to the community of family fragmentation are mentioned. The lesson concludes with a brief list of "bad reasons to get married." These include escaping an unpleasant current situation, and believing that a spouse will "make us whole" (Student Journal, p. 124). The lesson also presents a brief description of Sternberg's triangular theory of mature love (intimacy, passion, and commitment) to which *RQ* adds a fourth, compatibility (Student Journal, p. 126).

Under the heading Community Leadership, *RQ* offers a lesson on "Comprehending the Culture" a strongly worded statement against the modern sexual revolution, including critiques of Margaret Mead, Sigmund Freud and Alfred Kinsey. The lesson on "Synergy" recommends that students adopt the "win-win" mindset, applying themselves to work cooperatively with others to improve their communities. The lesson on "Community Leadership" urges students to take responsibility for being models in the community.

RQ also offers supplemental materials. *Angel's Bar and Grill* is a comic book with accompanying audiotape and study questions created to help students "understand the documented benefits of marriage both for children and for the couple." At *Angel's Bar and Grill*, Jack Kerouac, Malcolm X, Marilyn Monroe, and Sigmund Freud get together to discuss the sexual revolution. The last thought belongs to Malcolm X: "Where are the real men, who understand who and what they are? Where are the women who will demand real men, instead of just sex partners or inseminators?" Discussion questions in the separate study guide include: "Research shows that people who live together...have a higher rate of divorce. Why do you think that is?"[9]

Evaluation

Does RQ *have a marriage focus? Grade: A.*

RQ consistently relates issues of relationship skills, character development and teen sexual abstinence to the goal of successful marriage.

Does RQ *convey to students that marriage is beneficial and important? Grade: A.*

RQ provides a clear marriage vision, portraying marriage as the key to personal growth in love, intimacy, and sexual satisfaction. This program also emphasizes that marriage is a key social institution protecting adults, children and communities. Overall, *RQ* makes a stronger, more explicit case for marriage than any of the other curricula reviewed.

Is RQ *comprehensive? Grade: A.*

RQ combines reflections on literature with direct instruction in relationships skills, especially conflict management. It also presents a clear body of social science evidence suggesting that marriage benefits men, women, and children.

What do young people need to learn about marriage? And which of those things can and should they learn in school? Some believe that the thing most needed is skills: skills of listening and communicating; skills of problem-solving and conflict resolution; skills of budgeting and household management. Important though these are, they do not get to the heart of the matter. The heart of the matter is a matter of the heart: what it seeks, how it cares, what it reveres and treasures. Especially today, marriage education for the young must seek to educate the heart by ennobling the imagination, sharpening the eye and the judgment, and deepening the understanding of the meaning, purposes, and virtues of marriage.

In earlier times, many of these matters could be taken for granted. There was a common cultural belief in the goodness of marriage, rooted in shared religious understandings of its significance. Most young people grew up with the example of enduring marriages, and the idea of "until death do us part" was not only a cultural ideal, but also a nearly universal practice. Romance seeking permanence, rather than lust seeking gratification, was the ideal of song and story. Courtship rituals helped to discipline romance in the direction of lasting love and marriage, as they provided opportunities for the couple to learn about one another's character and to enact the attentiveness, dependability, care, exclusiveness, and fidelity that they would subsequently promise each other when they finally wed. Very little of this was the subject of formal education and discussion. These matters were learned tacitly, through lived experience, as people imbibed the ethics of everyday life.

Today, what was once tacit must be made explicit. In rearing the young, we can take nothing for granted. To help them find their bearings, we must go back to the fundamental questions. What is marriage and what is it for? Why should I want to be married? What is the difference between love and infatuation? What is the difference between being-in-love-with and actively-loving another person? Can there be real intimacy without love, respect, and friendship? Can love make good its promises in the absence of the promises we deliberately make in a wedding ceremony? What does it mean to promise "in sickness and in health, for better and for worse"? What kind of person do I have to become in order to live my life true to my own promises? How can I discover whether someone is the right person with whom I can make a life? What are the traits of character most needed in marriage? What does it mean to be faithful, to be trustworthy, to be responsible, to be considerate, to be genuinely caring? Can there be lasting marriage without friendship? Can there be faithful marriage without faith?

Today's youth, despite their apparent cynicism and coolness, are in fact quite interested in these questions, because they are concerned with their own prospects for happiness and fulfillment. They want to be taken seriously; they are looking for a life that is meaningful and rich; they are looking for trustworthy relationships and genuine intimacy, even if they do not yet know that their aspirations could be largely satisfied by marrying well. They will not take kindly to preaching and moralizing, but

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they will respond to anyone who begins with their concerns and helps them think in a constructive way about life's goals and purposes.

How can this best be done? In our thirty-year experience of teaching the young, the most successful way is through the serious discussion of fine literature that addresses life's important questions and that provides vicarious experience otherwise not readily available. On the subject of marriage, discussing novels, plays, and films helps students learn how to read character and how, for example, to distinguish the dependable long-distance runners from the flashy sprinters. Examining poems, essays, and memoirs helps students to become more thoughtful about what sex means, what love seeks, and what marriage can be like. Scrutinizing marriage vows and wedding ceremonies helps students to see how promises and rituals can shape and nurture our passionate attachments.

In our own course on courtship, we have found students eager to understand why the love of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet is tragic, but the love of As You Like It's Orlando and Rosalind, or of Jane Austen's Darcy and Elizabeth, is not. Students are interested in why Adam and Eve, when their eyes were opened, covered their nakedness, and, more generally, in whether and how modesty can transform lust into love. They are keen on discussing why Odysseus turns down life with the immortal nymph Calypso to return home to married life with his mortal Penelope. And they love trying to understand what Robert Frost means in suggesting to his daughter and her groom that "Two such as you with such a master speed/Cannot be parted nor be swept away/From one another once you are agreed/That life is only life forevermore/Together wing to wing and oar to oar."

The secret regarding marriage education is the same as for humanistic education in general: put first-rate materials before the students, ask them genuine and serious questions, and provide the climate for honest and searching conversation. They will rise to the occasion, and their hearts and minds will be better as a result.

Marriage education today must begin with questions of goals and meaning. Students need to see and want the end before they are willing to work at the means. Only when they understand and desire marriage will they be willing to tackle learning its skills.

The Kasses, both teachers at the University of Chicago, are authors of Wing to Wing, Oar to Oar: Readings on Courting and Marrying (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000).

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Is RQ *age-appropriate? Grade: B.*

RQ's main pedagogical strategy, the extended argument, may not be compelling or effective for some young people, especially as, except for student journaling, the course offers no classroom activities aside from discussion. Selections for reading are brief and appropriately easy to read. The program is also visually interesting.

RQ has done an in-house evaluation of its program, indicating it is an effective course of instruction for middle and high school students. The evaluation found a 26 percent increase in the number "of students who intend to wait to have sex until they are married," a 48 percent increase in the number "of students who strongly disagreed with the idea that having sex is natural and a normal part of a teenager's life," and a 75 percent increase in the number "of students who correctly defined monogamy as lifelong fidelity to one partner."[6]

Does RQ *promote habits of character which are likely to enhance marriageability? Grade: A.*

Though some parents and educators may view this curriculum's wholesale condemnation of the modern sexual revolution as overly strident and polemical, *RQ* is one of only two marriage curricula examined (the other is *The Art of Loving Well*) that consistently emphasizes the value of self-forgetting in relationships. This program's lessons on the moral and spiritual dimensions of marital fitness are unambiguous. Students are consistently urged to orient their behavior today toward their highest future goals as husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, and community leaders.

The Art of Loving Well

Description

Currently, one of the best-known programs overall is Boston University's *The Art of Loving Well* (1993), an anthology of readings, discussions, and activities designed to foster reflections on love and family life through the use of literature: poems, plays, myths, short stories, and literary excerpts both ancient and modern." These selections include work by such authors as Shakespeare, the Brothers Grimm, Tolstoy, D.H. Lawrence, S. I. Kishor, Maya Angelou, Victor Frankl, John Updike and many more. According to author Nancy McLaren, *Loving Well* has sold about 1,300 curricula; it appears to be one of the more widely used programs among those examined."[8]

The Art of Loving Well was originally conceived as a character education and pregnancy prevention program, designed for use in 8th and 9th grade English classes. But its emphasis on the journey through family love to romance, and from romance to marriage, makes it a natural fit for the newer field of marriage and relationship education. According to its authors, *The Art of Loving Well* uses "literature as a means to develop values and attitudes...conducive to responsible sexual behavior in adolescents."[9]

The program's premise is that "the best way to gain knowledge about [love] is by promoting conversation and reflection about our common human experience...By reflecting on the actions and decisions of characters in literature we can be better prepared as we face similar situations in our own lives" (p. 5). The readings are divided into three sections designed to correspond to the "three stages on the journey toward real love and intimacy" — early loves and losses, romance, and commitment and marriage.

Several themes predominate: "One is that we learn to love from our families and communities...Many of the stories in this book describe loves and losses that are connected with family life." Another "is that human relationships are complex and that it takes time to nurture true friendships and intimate partnerships. Love offers the potential for our greatest

happiness but also renders us vulnerable to great pain." A third theme is that "sexual relationships are a big deal and should never be taken lightly...: unless they are in the context of a deeply intimate and committed partnership, sexual encounters usually complicate problems rather than solve them." Finally, this course teaches students that "growth and change are possible if we are willing to take the time and trouble to learn all that is involved in loving well...It is never too late to take a new direction" (pp. 6-7).

Each lesson consists of reading a short story, excerpt, or poem, followed by suggestions for class discussion and activities. If a given reading is too difficult for a particular class, the text recommends a dramatic out-loud reading.

Evaluation

Does The Art of Loving Well *have a marriage focus? Grade: B.*

The Art of Loving Well was not designed as a marriage education program, and helping students understand marriage is not one of its explicit goals. At the same time, concern for marriage suffuses the program content, and the readings culminate in a comparison of three different marriage ceremonies, plus a mock classroom wedding.

A Church Youth Group Leader on R2 (FREE TEENS)

The pressure to date is really disturbing to kids. Their relationships with the opposite sex become a measure of their self-worth. Everything is geared toward attraction, and that popularity contest can be emotionally damaging. I have two teenage daughters who don't date, and when boys hear that, they are actually relieved. It means the pressure is off. I believe kids shouldn't date until they are at least 16 or 17, and then with boundary lines. Kids want a friend they can trust, not a sexual relationship. Many open up when we present the unit on intimacy...[They] are happy to know that sex is not intimacy.

I've taught FREE TEENS *to 40 [white, middle-class] 6th and 7th grade kids in Alabama. I also pulled from the book, I Kissed Dating Goodbye. I liked the workbook and discussion in* FREE TEENS. *It goes deep into character and goals. We do some readings, but I'm more into getting them to talk...to express a frustration or dilemma they have with a particular relationship. Kids today don't have any reinforcement from adults. When you ask boys who their role models are, about half say a Dad or an uncle, but the other half don't know. Most of the kids...[I've taught] do not have much of a relationship with their parents, and are home alone a lot. Obviously this is a dangerous situation and we talked a lot about how to avoid sexual encounters through the refusal skills taught by the program.*

We used the stories and scenarios in the workbook to unleash discussions, but I would always ask them questions like "What qualities do you wish to emulate?" or "How could you help your family?" to get them thinking.

The exploration of a person as a precious and unique individual is really the core of all healthy relationship awareness. The most effective material is "Questions for Reflection." A lot of the kids never think much about their actions. They act by impulse, and are motivated by wanting to be popular. FREE TEENS *gets kids to really reflect. I don't like the sociological component. Kids don't need to know the history of the mess we are in. Anyway, that's all too volatile with the parents.*

-Shelley Watanabe, Mobile, Alabama

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Does The Art of Loving Well *convey to students that marriage is beneficial and important? Grade: A.*

Loving Well consistently conveys to students that marriage is the ultimate context for loving well, and that within marriage, loving well takes time. "A happy wedlock is a long falling in love," we learn from Theodore Parker. "Young persons think love belongs only to the brown-haired and crimson-cheeked. So it does for its beginning. But the golden marriage is a part of love that the bridal day knows nothing of... Men and women are married fractionally, now a small fraction, then a large fraction. Very few are married totally, and then only after some forty or fifty years of gradual approach and experiment." (p. 290).

Is The Art of Loving Well *comprehensive? Grade: B*

The Art of Loving Well contains no explicit instructions in communication skills and no scientific information about the importance of marriage for children, adults or society. Because marriage is portrayed from so many different literary vantage points in literature, however, students are unusually well, if subtly, instructed about a variety of its important dimensions, including its sexual, child-rearing, financial, and spiritual dimensions. *Loving Well* looks at, for example, a daughter's feelings about her parent's divorce and father's remarriage, a young woman's romantic fantasy of "happily ever after", a cohabiting couples' struggle to think of themselves as candidates for permanence, the role even an absent wife can play in giving life meaning under the worst conditions, and how a young unwed father feels when his child's mother marries another man. *Loving Well* thus offers powerful implicit lessons on empathy, seeing the other's point of view, and the importance of viewing one's life and love in a long-term perspective.

Is The Art of Loving Well *age-appropriate? Grade: A.*

Loving Well demonstrates that it is possible to encourage teenagers to reflect on marriage in ways that are culturally sophisticated, intellectually rich, generous, and life enhancing. A 1992 evaluation of the program for the Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs found in four tests that students who had taken the *Loving Well* course were less likely to engage in sexual activity and were more "supportive of delayed sexual activity" than were students in a control group who had not been exposed to the course material."

Students' comments on the program were suggestive: "I've learned that you have to communicate for marriage to work. The other thing is that love takes time, and having sex or getting married doesn't fix your problems." And: "...I learned that life is too short, and you should try once in a while to do something nice for someone." And: "I do not have an average family...and always had trouble trying to deal with things at home, but after being in *Loving Well*, it's helped me get along a little better with my family and the tension at home has decreased somewhat. In my friendships, I can be more trusting of my peers and now I have more people trusting me."[8]

Does The Art of Loving Well *promote habits of character which are likely to enhance marriageability? Grade: A.*

Indirectly but very powerfully, *Loving Well* teaches self-control, empathy, and the importance of responsibility and high ideals. After reading and discussing works of Apuleius, Carson McCullers, John Updike and Charles Perrault, children have by their own accounts come away with the perception that they have better communication skills and a better understanding of their relationships with family and friends, even though they have received

no direct instruction in communications skills or scripts. Nancy McClaren, one of the creators of the *Loving Well* program, says that the program offers students "vicarious experiences under controlled circumstances," experiences that enable them to "prepare...for the 'real life' decisions they will eventually face."[52]

The Future of School-Based Marriage Education

As the high costs of family fragmentation become ever more apparent, interest in school-based marriage education is likely to grow. Support for this trend, however, is not universal. Some educators argue that these new marriage courses, by consuming scarce educational time and resources, may ultimately detract schools from their primary mission of providing students with a basic introduction to the natural and human sci-

A Teacher on the Loving Well Program

I use it in my Relationships and Marriage course for 11th and 12th graders and in my Teen Challenges and Choices class for 9th and 10th graders. I was already using literature before I found the program, but this program is ideal. Analyzing literature provides a safe place for kids to examine what their actions and reactions are in different situations. Some of these stories have amazing impact. They meet the kids exactly where they are, and pull them forward in their values and in their higher order thinking skills. I've found the story the kids like best is "Appointment with Love," by S.I. Kishor. It's only three pages long, but it says something so important to kids who are very much in tune with what people look like. It asks the question, "Can we fall in love with people who aren't good looking?" Before reading this story I always ask the students to list the qualities they are looking for in a boyfriend or a girlfriend. Good looks are always at or near the top of the list. Then they read the story and I have them interview adults about the qualities they think are important. They suddenly realize that other qualities are so much more important.

We prepare students for college and careers, but not for relationships. That's a whole gray area for kids — the question of what is a good relationship. I want to empower them to be in healthy relationships. It's hard, since this is the Howard Stern generation. Young people are desensitized. We don't have common courtesy anymore. The talk show hosts get paid more if they are offensive. On TV, [kids] see name calling and smart aleck behavior. I'm teaching them that there is better payoff for good manners in relationships.

Arvada High School has the highest rate of teen pregnancy in our county. I'm an advocate for teen sexual abstinence. I tell kids, "Probably nobody else is telling you to save yourself for marriage, but I am. Your virginity is the greatest gift you can give your husband or wife." I ask kids, "Who's telling you to have sex, and what's their purpose. Maybe it's the TV or movies, or your peers." I ask them "Do the people who are pressuring you to have sex love you?...What about the people who are telling you not to have sex, like your parents. Do they love you? It gets them to stop and think. Getting them to look at their lives now will help kids make better choices later.

-Peggy Calhoun, Jefferson County, Colorado

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ences and the humanities. The fact that some of the new marriage curricula are intellectually thin and one-dimensional only adds to this concern.

Some parents and religious leaders may feel that the schools are not the place to teach teenagers about marriage. In fact, even the best of the school-based marriage curricula tend largely toward a secular, psychological understanding of marriage. Traditional moral teachings about marriage, if they appear at all, often take a back seat; marriage is presented primarily as a means of self-fulfillment, rather than as a moral, social and spiritual good. Religion is largely invisible in most of these curricula, even though, in the real world, most U.S. couples get married in houses of worship and most people everywhere view the marriage vow as, at least in part, a sacred promise.

These are important concerns. At the same time, given the already deep involvement of public schools in teaching students about personal and sexual relationships, and given the strong and apparently growing public concern about the harmful consequences of high rates of divorce and unwed childbearing, the basic question for educators today is not whether, but *how* and *what*, to teach students about marriage. Viewed from this perspective, the emergence of marriage and relationship skills education in schools may, we believe, play a useful role in passing on to the next generation the knowledge, values and skills they will need to do better at marriage than their parents did.

Toward this end, we hope that the next generation of marriage curricula will expand its vision of what marriage is and what marriage education can be, and that teachers and curriculum developers in the coming years will strive for a more holistic, intellectually serious, and culturally sophisticated approach to marriage education.

The Limits of Skills

More research is needed to evaluate the success of skills-oriented marriage curricula in classroom settings. But there is much positive to be said about them. These programs acknowledge a very important fact of married life: It isn't always a picnic. Conflict in marriage is inevitable, and wise conflict management a key to living with what are sometimes irreconcilable differences. Diane Sollee, a leader in the marriage movement, notes that the single biggest cause of divorce today is "avoidance of conflict."[4] If so, we need to help young people learn to deal with their differences in ways that preserve and strengthen their relationships rather than destroy them.

At the same time, the findings of at least one leading scholar suggest that we should be cautious about curricula that focus primarily on communications skills scripts such as "I statements" and active listening that are derived from the counseling profession. In a longitudinal study of recently married couples published in the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, John Gottman and colleagues find that most successful marriages owe little if anything to communication techniques such as active listening. None of the communication and negotiation scripts derived from the counseling professions appear to be important tools for conflict resolution in successful marriages, at least in non-clinical samples.[5]

Gottman's own therapeutic repository is not without a communications skills component. He teaches "softening" or diplomacy in communication patterns, urging couples in conflict to register "complaints" with their spouses, rather than the "criticisms" which might lead to defensiveness and emotional withdrawal. Most of what he does to improve interspousal communication, however, does not involve superimposing scripts on couples in conflict, but instead is derived more organically, based on the communication patterns he observes in the relationship. For example, Gottman works with couples to employ and respond to their

own natural stores of "repair" mechanisms in arguments. He also encourages couples to strengthen their sense of the "we" by taking advantage of their natural alliance against potentially hostile forces outside the marriage. Finally, he urges them to make the effort to outweigh their negative interactions by a larger number of mutually understood positive gestures and interactions."[87]

Gottman's clinical findings suggest that future school-based marriage education curricula may be more successful if they are less adamant about presenting this or that particular communication technique, and more adamant about teaching the importance of marital preservation and marital friendship in general. Similarly, in a recent longitudinal study of married couples published in the *Journal of Family Issues*, Paul Amato and Allan Booth found that: "People who adopted more favorable attitudes toward divorce tended to experience declines in relationship quality, whereas those who adopted less favorable attitudes toward divorce tended to experience improvements in relationship quality or at least a slowdown in the gradual decline in marital happiness and interaction that characterizes many marriages."[88]

After all, successful marriages do not all conform to only one pattern. Tolstoy famously observed that "All happy families are like one another," but this assertion today appears to be naive. Perhaps Winifred, from *You Can Marry for Keeps*, says it best: There "is no recipe...no one secret." Some spouses yearn intently for togetherness, while others are happier leading more independent lives.[89] Some couples think it important to diffuse conflict before it accelerates. Others seem to thrive on contention. In *The Marriage Clinic*, Gottman finds not only that "volatile, passionate couples can have stable, happy marriages," but also that "bickering, passionate couples were the only ones to still have a romantic marriage after 35 years."[90] Marriage is simply too multifaceted and too intertwined with life's biggest questions — sex, culture, faith, generativity, to name just four — to be reduced to even the best repertoire of communication and negotiation scripts. Two personalities make every marriage unique. Marriage is one of the greatest and most mysterious of life's adventures. Would we want it any other way?

The Power of Stories

There is a special place for stories in the education of the young. For this reason, we conclude that marriage education based at least partly on literature carries several distinct advantages over marriage education based wholly on a therapeutic or counseling model. First, therapeutic and counseling models seldom encourage young people to shake off or transcend self-preoccupation, which is a hallmark of the adolescent personality. Indeed, one of the most widespread, and in our view arbitrary and misguided, tendencies in these new marriage skills curricula is the tendency — also dominant in almost all high school health textbooks — to assume that "self-esteem" and other concepts related to self-knowledge and self-fulfillment are ultimately the keys to satisfying relationships. But basing marriage education on this intellectually narrow and dubious premise — a premise that is simply *assumed* more often than it is formally articulated — can mislead students and can correspond to an essentially selfish view of marriage and of life.[91]

More generally, this philosophical and pedagogical bias in marriage education curricula may be part of a larger shift in American education. Little by little, one can detect the steady displacement of educational models based on cultural narratives and ideal forms by educational models based on technical information and therapeutic advice.

Literature-based marriage education, because it aims in the opposite direction, may therefore be a truer fit with the original academic mission of our schools. And because literature tells

stories about other people, it also allows students a safe space for reflection on important personal issues that, if explored in more directly therapeutic contexts, might threaten students' sense of privacy. Creating a field of impressions about love, romance, and marriage that are distant enough from the adolescent's personal experience to be examined with some dispassion and objectivity, but also close enough to touch the heart and soul, is no small task. But literature, film, the fine arts and philosophy allow young people the luxury of exploring the mysteries of sexual love and commitment without putting themselves personally at risk. Indeed, they allow young people to use literature, philosophy and the arts as (to borrow a phrase from Milan Kundera) "play" for the development of the "moral imagination."

Stories are also memorable. Relationships skills alone, absent an immediate context for their use (such as exists for the engaged or married couple), may make it harder for students to retain what they have been taught. But a story well told probably has more staying power than a list of negotiation techniques well memorized. Why? Because young people bring to literature not just their heads, but also their hearts. And surely marriage is at least as much about the heart as it is about the head.

For these reasons, future marriage education curricula might consider the idea of combining a relationship skills approach with selected readings from literature. For example, a lesson on the "Seven Most Prevalent Causes of Faulty Mate Selection" (see *Connections*, Lesson 10) might be combined with a reading of *Little Briar Rose* (the first selection from *The Art of Loving Well*). This reading would provide emotional and aesthetic reinforcement for precisely the point that the skills programs seek to make: that young people should wait for the right time and the right one to marry. Marriage is a cultural ideal as well as a set of skills, and there is no better vehicle for transmitting our shared ideals of love and marriage than stories from great literature and real lives.

Concluding Recommendations

To educators

Develop a new generation of school-based marriage curricula that informs students of the benefits of marriage; that teaches the attitudes, values, habits, and skills most likely to improve marital satisfaction and reduce the likelihood of divorce; that views marriage holistically, as both a personal relationship and a vital communal institution; and that combines an emphasis on learning interspousal communication skills with an emphasis on comprehending the larger meanings and dimensions of marriage as portrayed in the human sciences and especially in literature and the arts. Put briefly, and above all, teach that marriage is a "relationship," but also teach that marriage is *more* than a relationship.

To parents

Teach your children about the importance of marriage. For example, you might suggest that a successful marriage is at least as important, and worthy of at least as much preparation, as a good job or successful career. Try to insure that the marriage education your child receives in school acknowledges the importance of marriage, and try to reinforce to your child the most important message contained in the recent research on marriage and relationship skills: Divorce is not inevitable and marriage need not be a game of chance.

To scholars and philanthropic foundations

Design and conduct independent evaluations of current school-based marriage education programs. Arguably the greatest weakness in the marriage education movement today is the

near total absence of such evaluations through which outcome goals can be specified and measured. Of the current school-based marriage education curricula, which, if any, actually influence the courting and marrying behavior of young people? Unfortunately, no one knows. Here is a concrete and important piece of work that should be begun immediately.

To religious and community leaders

Supplement and build upon school-based marriage education with religious and community-based marriage education and preparation, including clergy-sponsored community marriage policies, which establish community-wide minimum standards of religiously informed marriage preparation and education for all couples wishing to get married in a local church, synagogue, or mosque.

To the marriage movement

By pursuing reforms in education, law, public policy, social services, philanthropy, marriage counseling, and elsewhere, by scholarship and advocacy, and by influencing public opinion, help to renew and transmit to young people a strong cultural ideal of enduring unions.

Curricula Examined

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EQ: The Social-Emotional Intelligence Program (1998). Mo Therese Hannah Ph.D. and Joe Marrone Ph.D., Siena College, Loudonville, NY; Telephone: (518) 783-0699 or (518) 783-8747. Email: *whannah1@nycap.rr.com*

PARTNERS: Teaching Teenagers the Relationship Skills that Maintain Marriage (1996). Lynn Gold Bikin, Esq. with Rita De Maria, M.S. Family Law Section, American Bar Association, 750 N. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60611. Telephone: (312) 988-5603; Email: *familylaw@abanet.org; Website: www.abanet.org/family/partners/home.html*

PEERS (Practical Exercises Enriching Relationship Skills) Training Manual and Teaching Guide, Levels 1-3 (1997) and *PAIRS KIDS* (2000). Lori H. Gordon, Ph.D. PAIRS International Inc., 1056 Creekford Drive, Weston, FL 33326; Telephone: (800) 477-2477; Email: *www.pairs.org*

RQ: Building Relationship Intelligence and *Love Smarts into Your Life* (2000). Richard Panzer. Center for Educational Media, P.O Box 97, Westwood, New Jersey 07675; Telephone: (800) 221-6116; Email: *cenedmedia@aol.com*; Website: *www.freeteens.org*

WISEP for Teens: Health, Life Management, A Comprehensive Approach Grades 9-12 (1998). Wendy Wise, EdD. The Wise Self-Esteem Project, P.O Box 2387, Merced, CA. Telephone: (209) 384-3691; Email: *wendy@elite.net*

You Can Marry For Keeps (1991). Rebecca Goalby, Jean Robbins and Cynthia Benjamin, with Marcia Laswell, Ph.D. Sunburst Communications, 101 Castleton Street, Pleasantville, NY 10570. Telephone: (800) 431 1934 from the US; (800) 247-6756 from Canada; Website: *www.sunburst.com*

Endnotes

1. Jodie Morse, et. al., 1999. "Hitched in Home Room: Seeking to Curb Divorces, Schools are Teaching the Facts of Married Life." *Time*, June 21. See also Karen S. Peterson, 1998. "Teaching Togetherness: Teens learn 'I do' Can Last Forever." *USA Today*, July 14.

2. For the leaders, aims, and overall philosophy of this movement, see the jointly authored document, *The Marriage Movement: A Statement of Principles* (New York: Institute for American Values, 2000); also available online to read and to become a signatory at *www.marriagemovement.org*.

3. See John M. Gottman, 1999. *The Marriage Clinic: A Scientifically-Based Marital Therapy* (New York: Norton); N. S., Jacobson, A. Christensen, S. E. Prince, J. Cordova, and K. Eldridge, 2000. "Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy: An Acceptance-Based, Promising New Treatment For Couple Discord" *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*; 68(2). A. Christensen, and N.S. Jacobson, 1999. *Reconcilable Differences* (New York: Guilford); S. M. Stanley, W. C. Lobitz, and F. Dickson, 1999. "Using What We Know: Commitment and Cognitions in Marital Therapy" in W. Jones and J. Adams (eds) *Handbook of Interpersonal Commitment and Relationship Stability* (New York: Plenum); and L. C. Blackman, 1995. "Marriage Enrichment: A Potential Strategy for Promoting Marital Satisfaction and Stability among African Americans" *Black Caucus* 2 (1): 21-30.

4. "A good marriage is not just a good private relationship, and married couples are not in a sealed bubble, immune from the influences of others. Though marriage is intimate and personal, marriage also has an inherently public side. Marriage is what lovers do when they want to bring their relationship out of the private realm of personal emotions and make it a social fact, visible to and recognized not only by the couple, but also by friends, family, church, government, and the rest of society. Good marriages are made, not born, and they are most likely to be made in a society that understands and values marriage as a shared aspiration and key social institution, not just a private affair of the heart." From *The Marriage Movement: A Statement of Principles*: 8.

5. Pam Belluck, 2000. "States Declare War on Divorce Rates, Before Any 'I Dos.'" *New York Times*, April 21.

6. Interview with Dr. Brent A. Barlow (Chair, Commission on Marriage, Office of Utah Governor Michael Leavitt), August, 2000.

7. 2000 is only an educated guess, based on interviews and on (incomplete) sales data provided by the curricula publishers.

8. Patricia Donvan, 1998. "School-Based Sexuality Education: The Issue and Challenges." *Family Planning Perspectives* 30, no. 4 (July/August): 189.

9. Interview with Tina Raglin, August, 2000.

10. Paul C. Vitz (Principal Investigator), 1998. *The Course of True Love: Marriage in High School Textbooks* (New York: Institute for American Values).

11. Marriage does not just protect children, but also provides profound advantages to adults. A wide body of social science literature confirms that men and women who marry live longer, stay physically and mentally healthier, and more sexually satisfied, earn more money, acquire more wealth, and have greater levels of self-reported happiness than single divorced or widowed persons. Both husbands and wives are also less likely to be victims of violence. Marriage turns out to be an important generator of social and human capital, for adults as well as children. For a summary of this research see Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher, 2000 (in press). *The Case For Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially* (New York, NY: Doubleday). See also, Ronet Bachman, 1994. "Violence Against Women" *A National Crime Victimization Survey Report* (Washington, D.C.: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics). See also Alan V. Horwitz (et. al.), 1996. "Becoming Married and Mental Health: A Longitudinal Study of a Cohort of Young Adults" *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58: 895-907. Catherine E. Ross, et. al., 1990. "Impact of the Family on Health: Decade in Review" *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 52: 1059-78. Steven Stack and J. Ross Eshelman, 1998. "Marital Status and Happiness: A Seventeen Nation Study" *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60:527-36. Linda J. Waite, 1995. "Does Marriage Matter?" *Demography* 32: 483-507. Finally, see Linda J. Waite and Kara Joyner, forthcoming. "Emotional and Physical Satisfaction in Married, Cohabiting, and Dating Sexual Unions: Do Men and Women Differ" in *Studies on Sex*, edited by E. Laumann and R.Michael (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

12. Lori H. Gordon, Ph.D., 1997. *An Overview: "PAIRS" for Schools. PEERS (Practical Exercises Enriching Relationship Skills). A Guide to Learning about PEERS.* (Weston, FL: Pairs Foundation, Ltd.). The quote is taken from the author's acknowledgements, p. 5.

13. Interview with Seth Eisenberg, August 2000.

14. Interview with Seth Eisenberg, August 2000.

15. See Lori H. Gordon, 2000. *PAIRS KIDS Curriculum Guide* (Weston, FL: PAIRS International, Inc.) Unit 5.

16. See *PAIRS KIDS*, Units 6 and 7. One user of the PEERS program we interviewed, Shirley Burnside, noted in an interview of August, 2000 that the fair fight for change is very advanced communication skill for kids, and difficult to teach.

17. In particular, Gordon cites the inspiration of Virginia Satir. See Virginia Satir, 1972. *Peoplemaking* (Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books).

18. Interview with Sherie Fuller Smith, August, 2000.

19. Interviews with Sherie Fuller Smith and Shirley Burnside, August 2000. It should be mentioned here that *PEERS* has undergone an evaluation by graduate students at the Loyola University School of Social Work. Surveying members of an Illinois high school support group, they found that three-quarters of those taking the course reported better anger management, better communication skills, and improvements in expressing feelings; slightly more than half reported improvements in their relationships with relatives.

20. Lori H. Gordon, 1999. *PEERS* (Weston, FL: Pairs Foundation Ltd.) Level III: 60.

21. Mo Therese Hannah and Joe Marrone, 1998. *EQ: Social Emotional Intelligence Program for Kindergarten* through 8th Grade (Loudonville, NY: Siena College): 86.

22. Mo Therese Hannah and Joe Marrone, 1998. *EQ*: 62.

23. Interview with Mo Therese Hannah, July 2000.

24. Charlene R. Kamper, 1999. *Connections: Dating and Emotions* (Berkeley, CA: The Dibble Fund for Marriage Education).

25. Charlene R. Kamper, 1999. *Connections: Dating and Emotions: Teacher's Manual*, 19.

26. For an insightful study of "close relationship" theory, and more generally of how leading scholars currently conceptualize courtship and its relationship to marriages, see Dan Cere (Principal Investigator), 2000. *The Experts' Story of Courtship* (New York: Institute for American Values).

27. Charlene R. Kamper, 1999. *Connections: Dating and Emotions*: Teacher's Manual: 32.

28. For a full discussion of changing teen dating patterns over the century, along with an analysis of current teen dating practices using data from the 1991 National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, see David Gilmore, Dana Mack and Steven Nock, 1999. "Marriage in the Making?: A Report on the Courtship Customs of Young Americans" (New York, NY: Working Paper 71, Institute for American Values).

29. Wendy Wise, 1998. *WISEP for Teens* (Merced, CA: The Wise Self-Esteem Project).

30. Interview with Wendy Wise, July, 2000.

31. Wendy Wise, 1998. *WISEP*, Volume I: Family: 1-16.

32. Wendy Wise, 1998. *WISEP*, Volume I: Communication.

33. Wendy Wise, 1998. *WISEP*, Volume II: Teen Pregnancy.

34. Wendy Wise, 1998. *WISEP*, Volume II: Personal and Family Crisis: 39.

35. Wendy Wise, 1998. *WISEP*, Volume II: Relationships: 71.

36. See Paul Vitz, Principal Investigator, 1998. *The Course of True Love: Marriage in High School Textbooks* (New York: Institute for American Values).

37. Wendy Wise, 1998. *WISEP*, Volume I: Family: 41-43.

38. Wendy Wise, 1998. *WISEP*, Volume II: Relationships: 67.

39. Interview with Barbara Adams, August 2000.

40. Interview with Barbara Adams, August 2000.

41. See especially Wendy Wise, 1998. *WISEP*, Volume I: Communication: p. 13.

42. Wendy Wise, 1998. *WISEP*, Volume II: Relationships, p. 56.

43. See Glenn, 1997. *Closed Hearts, Closed Minds: The Textbook Story of Marriage*.

44. Interview with Karen Olson, February 2000.

45. The assertion that "more than half" of recent marriages today are likely to end in divorce, while widely repeated in even the most recent textbooks and other curricula, is probably incorrect.

Divorce rates have declined significantly since 1980. Today, it is almost certainly more accurate to say that fewer than half, probably about 40 percent, of all first-time marriages are likely to end in divorce. Accordingly, school-based marriage curricula should stop telling young people, as if it were an inevitable fact of life, that "more than half" of their marriages will fail. See David Blankenhorn, 2000. "Knowing Full Well," *Propositions* 9 (New York: Institute for American Values). In addition, the assertion that spouses "simply cannot afford" to rely economically upon one another is more a statement of philosophy than a summary of evidence. It also reflects what, in the case of many couples, would be a dubious philosophy, given the importance of interdependence in strong marriages, including those forms of economic interdependence in which, for example, one spouse stays at home for some time to care for a baby or for a sick family member.

46. David H. Olson, John De Frain, Amy K. Olson, 1999. *Building Relationships: Developing Skills for Life* (Minneapolis, MN: Life Innovations): 5.

47. In a section which outlines the hardships of single parenting, the authors observe, "The best preparation for parenthood is to learn about healthy intimate relationships: to learn how to find a good partner, how to develop a successful relationship, and how to enjoy the benefits of that relationship for a long time into the future." It is difficult to discern, here, whether the authors are speaking of marriage or simply of an "intimate relationship" without a legal bond. And this brings up the problem of marriage neutral, sex neutral vocabulary, in *Building Relationships*, and in many other programs. In these programs, "husbands" and "wives" are typically referred to not even as "spouses," but as "partners." See *Building Relationships*: 105.

48. For the benefits of marriage to individual well being, see footnote 11.

49. Although there is no statistically significant evidence that people who marry after age 30 are more likely to divorce, there is some evidence indicating that people who marry late do not report having as successful marriages as those who marry in their mid twenties. According to Norval Glenn, Professor of Sociology at the University of Texas, the optimal marriage age for both a stable and high quality marriage is 23 to 24 for women and 25 to 26 for men. See Norval Glenn (forthcoming). "Age at Marriage and Marital Success."

50. There is an emphasis here on egalitarian marriage that, while attractive to some, will seem outdated to others. Egalitarian in this text means not "equal regard" or "power sharing" between men and women but role similarity. In Chapter 9, "Role Relationships," students are told that "Husbands should share household duties equally with their wives." No allowance is made for any other role division spouses may agree upon within marriage. Important truths well established by research on marital success such as "The husband should be just as willing as the wife to adapt in marriage" (page 166) are thus conflated with the personal role preferences of the authors. For the latest research on gender role preferences among married men and women, see Linda J. Waite and Mark Neilsen, 1999. "The Decision to Allocate Time Between Market and Non-Market Activities" (Chicago, ILL: University of Chicago, Center on Parents, Children and Work at the Alfred P. Sloan Working Families Center, May (revised December 1999): 14.

51. See J.R. Kahn and K.A. London, 1991. "Premarital Sex and the Risk of Divorce," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53, November: 845-855.

52. John M. Gottman, 1999. *The Marriage Clinic: A Scientifically Based Marital Therapy* (New York, NY; W.W. Norton & Company): 19-20.

53. Interview with Katie Callan, August 2000.

54. In creating the communications skills component of this course, the American Bar Association Section of Family Law consulted with the PAIRS Foundation.

55. Lynne Gold-Bikin, Esq., with Rita De Maria M.S., 1996. *Partners* (Chicago, Ill.: American Bar Association Section of Family Law): Segment IV: 9.

56. Lynne Gold-Bikin, Esq., with Rita De Maria, M.S., 1996. *Partners*: Teachers Manual: 37.

57. Interview with Sandra Kokinda, August, 2000.

58. Interview with Kay Reed, March 2000.

59. Charlene R. Kamper, 1996. *Connections: Relationships and Marriage* (Berkeley, CA: The Dibble Fund for Marital Enhancement).

60. Charlene R. Kamper, 1996. *Connections: Relationships and Marriage*: Teacher's Manual: 29.

61. Interview with Sherie Fuller Smith, August 2000.

62. See Scott P. Gardner, Ph.D., 1999. "Evaluation of the Connections: Relationships and Marriage

Curriculum in south Dakota High Schools, presented at the third annual SmartMarriages/Happy Families Conference, Wash. DC, July 1: 1.2.

63. Rebecca Goalby, Jean Robbins and Cynthia Benjamin, with Professor Marcia Laswell, 1991. *You Can Marry for Keeps* (Pleasantville, NY: Sunburst Communications).

64. See Goalby, Robbins, and Benjaim, with Lasswell, 1991. *You Can Marry For Keeps*, Teachers Guide: 13-15.

65. Goalby, Robbins, and Benjamin, with Lasswell, 1991. *You Can Marry for Keeps*: 42-43.

66. Goalby, Robbins, and Benjamin, with Lasswell, 1991. *You Can Marry for Keeps*: 43.

67. Goalby, Robbins, and Benjamin, with Lasswell, 1991. *You Can Marry for Keeps*: 43.

68. Olson, De Frain and Olson, 1999. *Building Relationships*: 60: 177-189.

69. Goalby, Robbins, and Benjamin, with Lasswell, 1991. *You Can Marry for Keeps*: 11.

70. Goalby, Robbins, and Benjamin, with Lasswell, 1991. *You Can Marry for Keeps*: 21.

71. Richard A. Panzer, 2000. *Free Teens USA*, (Westwood, NJ: Center for Educational Media).

72. Interview with Richard Panzer, February 2000.

73. Richard Panzer, 2000. *RQ: Building Relationship Intelligence and Love Smarts into Your Life* (Westwood, NJ: Center for Educational Media) Student Journal: 100.

74. Quote from *RQ: Buildings Relationship Intelligence...*: Student Journal: 122.

75. Richard A. Panzer, 1995. *Angels Bar and Grill: Comic Book and Study Guide* (Westwood, NJ: Center for Educational Media).

76. For more on the *Free Teens USA* evaluation, see "Free Teens Impact Measured," in *Free Teens: Challenging Teens, Creating Leaders for the 21st Century*, Volume 8, no. 1, Spring-Summer 2000: 5.

Richard A. Panzer, 1995. *Angels Bar and Grill: Comic Book and Study Guide* (Westwood, NJ: Center for Educational Media).

77. Dr. Stephan Ellenwood, Nancy McLaren, Dr. Ronald Goldman, Dr. Kevin Ryan, 1993. *The Art of Loving Well: A Character Education Curriculum for Today's Teenagers* (Boston, Mass; Boston University).

78. Interview with Nancy McLaren, February 2000.

79. See Amelia Kreitzer, December, 1992. "Evaluation of the *Loving Well* Curriculum: Final Report prepared for the Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs," (Chestnut Hill, MA: Boston College): 1.

80. Amelia Kreitzer, 1992. "Evaluation of the *Loving Well* Curriculum: Final Report....": 21.

81. The author is grateful to Nancy McLaren for providing her with these student comments on the *Loving Well* program.

82. Interview with Nancy McLaren, June, 2000.

83. From comments at the release in New York on May 2nd, 1998 of *The Course of True Love: Marriage in High School Textbooks*. At the June 29, 2000 release in Denver of *The Marriage Movement: A Statement of Principles*, Sollee similarly argued: "We need to get out the message now, and tell people before they get married that it's okay to fight. Right now, we're sending couples out onto the football field and not telling them the rules."

84. Gottman, Carrere, Coan and Swanson, 1998. "Predicting Marital Happiness and Stability from Newlywed Interactions," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60: 5-22.

85. For Gottman's therapeutic methods, see principally, John M. Gottman, 2000, *The Marriage Clinic*.

86. Paul Amato and Allan Booth, 1999. "Do Attitudes Toward Divorce Affect Marital Quality?" *Journal of Family Issues*, vol. 20, no. 1: 69-86. Quoted on pp. 84-85.

87. John M. Gottman with Nan Silver, 1994. *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail...and How You Can Make Yours Last* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster). See especially chapter 2, "The Good, The Bad and the Volatile." In this chapter, Gottman develops what he terms a "typology" of married couples which he breaks down into three main styles of marital interaction: the volatile, the validating, and the conflict-avoiding.

88. John M. Gottman, 1999. *The Marriage Clinic*: 14.

89. In her introduction to *PEERS*, Lori H. Gordon, for example, advertises the program as a "self skills" course focusing on "self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-love." Lori H. Gordon, 1997. *"PAIRS" for Schools: PEERS: A Guide To Learning About Peers*. For this problem in high school health textbooks, see Vitz, 1998. *The Course of True Love: Marriage in High School Textbooks*.

About the Artist

Robert Weber grew up in Los Angeles, served in the U.S. Coast Guard in World War II, and attended art school in New York City. Since 1962 he has been a regular contributor of cartoons and cover illustrations to *The New Yorker* and well over 1200 of his drawings have been published in its pages. He lives with is wife in Connecticut.

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